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General Assembly

Official Records

First Committee

5th Meeting
Wednesday, 15 October 1997, 3 p.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Nkgowe . . . . . (Botswana)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda items 62 to 82 *(continued)*

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

The Chairman: I would like to remind delegations to limit their statements, as much as possible, to the 15-minute time limit.

Mr. Than (Myanmar): It gives me great pleasure to extend my warmest congratulations to you, Sir, on your unanimous election as the Chairman of the First Committee. I wish you every success.

Recently, there has been an unprecedented groundswell of interest and support among the international community for nuclear disarmament. The broad spectrum of the international community clamouring for the elimination of nuclear weapons includes not only Member States of the United Nations, but also non-State entities and individuals such as the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, the International Court of Justice, non-governmental organizations and ex-military officials of some nuclear-weapon States. This is indeed a very encouraging trend.

Significant developments are taking place in the area of bilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations. We welcome the conclusion of the START I and START II treaties and the deep reductions in the nuclear arsenals of the United States and the Russian Federation. We look forward to the full implementation of these treaties. We also note with appreciation the unilateral measures taken by some nuclear-weapon States.

We must, however, stress here that in carrying out nuclear disarmament measures the nuclear-weapon States must do so in good faith and in the larger interests of the international community, which are also consistent with their national interests, but must not try to circumvent treaty provisions in order to gain technical and strategic advantage. In this respect, we were concerned to learn of the recent subcritical nuclear tests carried out by one nuclear-weapon State. What we want is the total cessation of all nuclear tests -- be they subcritical or supercritical, explosive or non-explosive — in all environments, for all time.

Turning to the activities of the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, we regret that there was a standstill in the work of the Conference on Disarmament during its 1997 session. Some nuclear-weapon States are still reluctant to conduct discussions and negotiations on nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament. That is why the Conference on Disarmament finds itself in a standstill situation on nuclear disarmament and other related issues.

The main contention of these nuclear-weapon States is that nuclear disarmament — that is, a phased programme of reductions of nuclear weapons leading to their elimination — is the exclusive domain of bilateral negotiations between the nuclear-weapon States. This contention is fatally flawed. It is morally indefensible, logically incoherent and politically unacceptable.

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As all of us are aware, nuclear war knows no boundary. An outbreak of nuclear war will certainly affect the security of all nations and all humanity. How can they claim that matters relating to the removal of the nuclear threat and the elimination of these weapons are their exclusive concern and domain? As a matter of fact, the nuclear threat infringes upon the very fundamental human right of humanity: the right to life.

Moreover, if we look at the record of disarmament agreements in the past, we shall find that all multilateral disarmament agreements banning weapons of mass destruction and other weapon systems involve not only weapon-possessing States, but also non-weapon States, right from the negotiation phase to the final stage of signature and adherence. To cite just a few examples, the Biological Weapons Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention and, most recently, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) were negotiated in the Conference on Disarmament. Why should the Conference be denied the role for which it has been established? Why should nuclear weapons be an exception to this well-established rule?

In view of the above and several other sound reasons which I could go on citing, it is evident that there is a need to multilateralize nuclear disarmament negotiations and start substantive work on this issue in the Conference on Disarmament. We do recognize that bilateral negotiations between the nuclear- weapon States will play a major role, particularly in the negotiation of specific detailed measures and steps in the nuclear disarmament process. At the same time, the Conference on Disarmament can and should play an important and useful role in working out a general framework agreement or agreements on nuclear disarmament. We take the view that multilateral and bilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament are not mutually exclusive, but that they are complementary to one another and mutually reinforcing.

This indeed constitutes the rationale and main thrust of resolutions 50/70 P and 51/45 O on nuclear disarmament, which my delegation introduced, with the co-sponsorship of many countries of the Non-Aligned Movement, at the fiftieth and fifty-first sessions of the General Assembly respectively. My delegation will introduce a follow-up draft resolution on nuclear disarmament at this year's session as well. We hope that in view of the immense importance of the subject Member States will once again give overwhelming support to the draft resolution.

A ban on fissile materials is a question that needs to be addressed with great urgency. An Ad Hoc Committee on fissile materials was established in the Conference on Disarmament in 1995. The Committee was, however, unable to carry out any substantive work. It is regrettable that since then the Conference on Disarmament has been unable to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee on the prohibition of the production of fissile material and to make any progress on this issue. We should spare no efforts to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee in the Conference on Disarmament and commence negotiations on this subject as soon as possible.

Another important nuclear issue is that of security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States. The time is indeed opportune to negotiate and conclude an international legal instrument providing security assurances by the nuclear-weapon States not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States. We should further pursue our efforts in the Conference on Disarmament, as well as in the meetings of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), in order to make substantive progress and produce concrete results on this important issue.

At a time when we are considering the reform of the United Nations in the General Assembly, it is only fitting that we should also review the role of the Conference on Disarmament and find ways and means to revitalize and strengthen it. May I express here, in passing, a few thoughts on this issue.

In my view, flexibility is the key word in this task. The working method and the rules of procedure of the Conference on Disarmament are in themselves quite flexible. If we could add a few more flexible practices and applications here and there, it could be helpful in overcoming some difficulties encountered by the Conference. Equally important is, of course, the flexibility of the positions of the Member States, particularly the nuclear-weapon States.

In all their wisdom and foresight, the drafters of the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament rightly laid down priorities for disarmament negotiations, giving the highest priority to nuclear disarmament and related nuclear issues. Undoubtedly, we should abide by these priorities, which still remain valid today.

There have been several proposals to introduce conventional arms control issues in the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament so that it may be better

balanced. My delegation is prepared to consider such proposals. We must, however, ensure that conventional arms control issues are correctly chosen and accurately identified. The issue of anti-personnel landmines could have been a suitable subject for negotiation in the Conference on Disarmament. Another issue that merits serious consideration as a subject for discussion in the Conference on Disarmament is that of illicit trafficking in small arms.

The Conference on Disarmament is the single multilateral negotiating forum dealing with disarmament. Its main function is to negotiate arms limitation and disarmament treaties and agreements. This role should remain and be further strengthened. At the same time, we may also encourage useful pre-negotiation processes or preparatory work that will prepare the ground and facilitate negotiations. In fact, this is what the Conference on Disarmament has already been doing. The appointment of thematic special coordinators is such a process.

Last year, my delegation, in a statement in this Committee, made a proposal that, in the event that consensus still eluded us on a separate ad hoc committee, the Conference on Disarmament might establish an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament with two working groups dealing with nuclear disarmament and fissile materials, respectively. We feel that, if the Conference on Disarmament finds itself in the same situation once again at its 1998 session, this proposal can still be further pursued.

Our position is well known. We should like to see the establishment of a separate ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament, on a priority basis, and the commencement of negotiations on the subject at an early date. However, in the event that consensus for this remains elusive at the beginning of the 1998 session of the Conference on Disarmament, we may adopt one of the aforementioned alternative approaches, as appropriate.

With regard to the programme of work of the Conference on Disarmament, we believe that urgent tasks before the Conference are nuclear disarmament, a ban on fissile materials, and negative security assurances. Whatever programme of work the Conference on Disarmament may adopt at its 1998 session, it must include these crucial issues.

This is a year of reform for the United Nations. The General Assemble is considering the reform package proposed by Secretary-General Kofi Annan in his report "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform". We welcome the proposal by the Secretary-General, in his reform package, to upgrade the Centre for Disarmament as the Department for Disarmament and Arms Regulation, to be headed by a very senior official with the rank of Under-Secretary-General.

As regards the institutional reforms proposed by the Secretary-General in his reform package, these reform measures should be carefully studied and thoroughly discussed before we take firm decisions on them. It is crucially important that emphasis be appropriately placed in these institutional reforms. The principled stand of my delegation is that emphasis should be placed on the objective of disarmament, rather than merely on its non-proliferation aspect. We are therefore in favour of strengthening the Geneva branch of the new Department, which is actually providing support facilities and services for disarmament negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament.

Last month, the Conference in Oslo finalized a draft convention on the prohibition of anti-personnel landmines. We are supportive of banning the export and indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines. In our view, we should address the real issues of the question, rather than impose a sweeping ban on anti-personnel landmines. We believe that every nation should have the right to self-defence in matters of its national self-defence.

I should now like to turn briefly to the work of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific. The Regional Centre has been most active in promoting security dialogue among the Member States in the region. We fully appreciate and support the regional security dialogue process, known as the Kathmandu process, initiated by the Regional Centre. The ongoing series of regional conferences and seminars as part of the Kathmandu process have provided the countries in the region with excellent opportunities to address important regional and international disarmament issues and their security concerns. With these activities, the Regional Centre has made a significant contribution to the promotion of security dialogue and the cause of peace and security in the region. Accordingly, we should like to see a further expansion of these activities by the Regional Centre for the benefit of the countries in the region.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is generally considered to be the first step in the nuclear disarmament process. Now this first step has been taken, but a long road lies ahead of us. The issues are so important and the time so opportune that we cannot afford

a standstill. We must redouble our efforts to move forward on these crucial issues.

Mr. Wibisono (Indonesia): I should like to begin by expressing my delegation's congratulations, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. We remain confident, that under your guidance, we will register substantive progress in dealing with a number of important issues on our agenda.

The First Committee is meeting against the backdrop of some encouraging developments in arms control and disarmament. The Helsinki summit held last March between the leaders of the United States and the Russian Federation, which reaffirmed the commitment of the two leading nuclear Powers to implement the provisions of START II and to initiate negotiations for further reductions in nuclear armaments, was a significant step forward. Likewise, after years of stalemate, the agreement reached between the Russian Federation and the Ukraine on the Black Sea Fleet is an encouraging development.

Considerable progress has also been made in the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various parts of the world, which has become an irreversible trend towards a denuclearized world. Thus, the four existing zones and a prospective new nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia would include a majority of nations covering a vast land mass and its people. The Preparatory Committee for the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) Review Conference began its task in earnest last April, focusing on the main provisions of the Treaty and on the structures of the new review process. And in an unprecedented stand taken in last December, 61 generals and admirals from 17 countries, some of whom have commanded nuclear forces, questioned the utility of nuclear weapons, which pose the greatest threat to global security, and called for the reduction of arsenals to very low levels through deep cuts, with the ultimate objective of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

These positive developments notwithstanding, we cannot be oblivious to the dangers posed by the continued existence of nuclear arsenals. Even though the two leading nuclear Powers are no longer locked in military confrontation and the prospect of nuclear holocaust has receded, thousands of nuclear weapons are still on trigger alert. The dangers inherent in high-alert status have long been self-evident. On land, intercontinental ballistic missiles are ready to launch within minutes, and at sea nuclear-armed submarines are on round-the-clock patrol.

Further compounding the situation is the absence of agreements that call for the dismantling of nuclear warheads or proposals to move beyond START II. The lack of reliable command and control systems has increased the risk of technical malfunctions, ageing and obsolete weapons, early-warning system failures, the inadvertent or accidental use of nuclear weapons, seizures of weapons or weapon materials, and threats or actual use by non-state actors. We should also note the announcement by a nuclear-weapon State to conduct subcritical tests, which would be inconsistent with the spirit of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), lead to the increased sophistication of weapons and constitute a serious setback to the ongoing efforts to stem proliferation and to achieve nuclear disarmament.

Hence, with the diminished role and utility of nuclear weapons and their continued unacceptable risks, it is time to remove nuclear weapons from alert status, to renounce their use and to initiate negotiations for START III, seeking further deep reductions on strategic weapons while dismantling warheads and not just delivery systems, such as missiles, which have been the focus of all previous arms control agreements.

There is also a need to take a fresh look at the question of negative security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States. Furthermore, rationalizations for the continued possession of nuclear weapons need to be discarded. So long as the role of nuclear weapons in ensuring security is not delegitimized and existing nuclear doctrines are not abandoned, there will always be a threat of a resumption of the nuclear arms race and the escalation of the nuclear threat. It is therefore incumbent upon us to translate the objective of eliminating nuclear weapons from a rhetorical goal into a reality. This calls for sustained multilateral efforts to identify, negotiate and implement specific step-by-step measures for the total abolition of nuclear weapons. Against this sombre backdrop, it is regrettable that the Conference on Disarmament has once again failed to reach a consensus on establishing an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament to commence negotiations on a phased programme for the elimination of nuclear weapons within a given time-frame.

The question of convening the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV) has been on the agenda of the General Assembly since its forty-ninth session, and is supported by an overwhelming majority of Member States. Since the Cartagena Summit held in 1995, the Non-Aligned Movement has considered this issue of paramount

importance in order to assess the successes and setbacks of the past and to set the future course of action on a broad spectrum of disarmament and related issues. It has been self-evident that the unilateral policies and partial measures of the past no longer suffice and that the multi-dimensional nature of armaments calls for a collective approach. In the proposals for reform of the United Nations, the Secretary-General called disarmament a

> "central issue on the global agenda" [A/51/950, para. 122]

and said that:

> "nations ... have come to recognize their stake in the success of multilateral negotiations ... As a consequence, the United Nations has taken centre stage in the worldwide effort to limit both weapons and conflict." [*ibid.*]

Hence the resurgence of the United Nations and renewed trust in its capacity to deal effectively with disarmament issues make it obligatory on the part of Member States to mobilize the necessary political will and to utilize the Organization in a more purposeful way to sustain the disarmament process.

In this context, it was my delegation's privilege to submit a working paper containing the views of the Non-Aligned Movement, which we believe has made a distinct contribution in clarifying the issues involved. Furthermore, Indonesia, in its capacity as Chairman of the Working Group of the United Nations Disarmament Commission on the issue of convening SSOD IV, submitted a paper which contains a list of possible agenda items that may be addressed by the Disarmament Commission at its next session. These and other proposals, taken together, offer heightened prospects for the emergence of a consensus on the objectives and agenda of SSOD IV and the drafting of a forward-looking plan of action that may lead to its being convened on the eve of the new millennium.

The task ahead, however, calls for both vision and foresight concerning our long-term and short-term objectives, the identification of specific measures at both the global and regional levels, together with their time-frame, as well as the essential components and characteristics of our disarmament agenda and institutional arrangements. These and a host of other pertinent issues will have to be addressed and clarified during the preparatory stage if we are to proceed further and lay a solid foundation for our disarmament endeavours.

As far as anti-personnel landmines are concerned, the Ottawa process represents a significant accomplishment as it seeks to prohibit the signatories from producing, using or stockpiling such landmines and requires that they remove those that are already sown. But the Ottawa process, while an important part of our endeavours to rid the world of mines, does not provide a complete and final answer to dealing with the multitude of problems posed by these landmines. It should be acknowledged that it is an issue with both humanitarian and national security implications. We are fully cognizant of the humanitarian gains of a ban on anti-personnel landmines which have taken an unconscionable toll on civilians. In recognition of these realities and because of our firm commitment to a mine-free world, Indonesia has contributed to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance and participated in various international forums and instruments such as the inhumane weapons Convention landmine Protocol and the Ottawa process.

However, we should take into account the need for anti-personnel landmines for national defence purposes, while stressing that humanitarian considerations should not be subordinated to vital security interests. My delegation therefore realizes the complexity attendant upon achieving an international agreement to ban the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines, which also has financial and technical implications. A cautious approach would be needed when addressing a question of such importance and magnitude. Thus, while Indonesia is fully aware that anti-personnel landmines have adverse humanitarian effects, negotiations must necessarily take into account the diverse perspectives of all nations.

The staggering cost of $33 billion and the millennial time-scale projected for demining endeavours call for concerted international efforts, which should address, among other issues, distrust between adversaries, a shortage of resources and trained personnel, the laying of new minefields, the dearth of advanced new demining techniques and new tools to detect mines — all leading to a coordinated approach to faster and more effective ways to clear the scourge of mines. In my delegation's view, the magnitude of such a task can only be undertaken with the expertise and experience of the Conference on Disarmament.

Meanwhile, the amendment to Protocol II of the inhumane weapons Convention contains comprehensive provisions for the scope of application, restrictions on the use of anti-personnel landmines, a ban on transfers, their removal, protection against their harmful effects, and

technical cooperation. Until such time as all States can accept a total ban on anti-personnel landmines, this amendment should constitute part of a broader strategy that could substantially reduce the disastrous effects of the indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines.

Finally, the proposal to re-establish the Department for Disarmament and Arms Regulation is under the authority of the Secretary-General. However, the priority to be accorded to the Department — namely, non-proliferation issues — would seem incompatible with the principles, priorities and Programme of Action adopted by consensus at the conclusion of SSOD I, and which retain their validity and relevance.

In this regard, my delegation wishes to express its gratitude to the Secretary-General for submitting document A/52/CRP.3 to the General Assembly today. The presentation of additional information and clarification concerning his proposal is indeed both timely and appropriate so as to shed light on the Assembly's deliberations on the issue. It has persuaded us to expect greater clarity on the overall issue of re-establishing the Department to deal with disarmament and related issues, and we will be studying carefully the contents of the document with a view to expressing our views during the consideration of the reform proposal.

Mr. Wyzner (Poland): At the outset of my intervention, let me express to you, Mr. Chairman, my sincere felicitations on your election to the Chair of the First Committee. We are pleased to see an eminent son of Africa and distinguished representative of Botswana preside over deliberations that relate to the concerns that are most vital to all of us — those of peace and security in the world. You can rely, Sir, on my delegation's good will and full cooperation in the discharge of your important mandate.

Poland fully subscribes to and strongly associates itself with the statement that Luxembourg made in this debate on behalf of the European Union. For this reason, it is my intention to confine my intervention to some "country-specific" questions that are of direct interest to Poland and relate to its vital security interests.

In that regard, two events of epochal dimensions took place last July. First, the members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), at a summit conference in Madrid, extended an invitation to Poland, as well as to the Czech Republic and Hungary, to open negotiations concerning their membership in the alliance. Secondly, the members of the European Union (EU) approved the *avis* of the European Commission, a step which in effect opens the door to negotiations on EU membership for Poland. Both these decisions respond to the long-standing aspirations of my compatriots. In this respect, there is a remarkable consensus of all the principal parties active on Poland's political scene.

These two events are going to recast the political situation on the European continent, especially in its East Central region. They carry major implications for the security of Poland and beyond. In his statement in Warsaw following the Madrid meeting, the President of Poland, Mr. Aleksander Kwasniewski, declared *inter alia*, in the presence of President Bill Clinton, that

> "Poland does not turn its back on anyone and does not look for friends afar nor for enemies next door. Poland prides itself on the friendship and confidence it enjoys among its neighbours. Security and prosperity is our common cause and therefore we are in favour of the future expansion of NATO to other democratic countries of the region."

Over the past centuries, generations of Europeans have gone through and suffered from many a war. They have also seen numerous attempts to provide for a lasting peace and stability. A "new international order" emerged from the Congress of Vienna, then another from the Treaty of Versailles, and then yet another from Yalta. Ultimately, they all failed because of the contradictory interests of the principal actors.

The future expansion of NATO, together with such momentous developments as the NATO accords with the Russian Federation and Ukraine, the Russo-Ukrainian agreement, and the establishment of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, demonstrates that this time a totally new European order is in the making. It is an order which offers the countries of East Central Europe a historic opportunity for security, political stability, and successful development. It is an order which, in effect, obliterates the infamous post-Yalta system imposed at the close of the Second World War.

The difference now, on the threshold of the twenty-first century, is that the new order is constructed around expanding Euro-Atlantic structures, but also relies on a set of multilateral security accords and institutions, including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. It is, moreover, an order supported by the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO

and the Russian Federation, a document that reflects the determination of NATO and Russia

> "to build together a lasting and inclusive peace in the Euro-Atlantic area on the principles of democracy and cooperative security".

Based on universally recognized democratic principles and values, economic integration and cooperative security, the Euro-Atlantic order will certainly be more resilient and dependable than any in the past. An expanding NATO is not a threat, real or imagined, to anyone. As a transparent defensive political structure, it is a factor of stability. Its primary objective is peace: to protect it, if possible, or to enforce it, if necessary.

As we approach the threshold of the twenty-first century, the fact that the international community has managed, through concerted efforts, to ban weapons of mass destruction or bring them under increasingly effective control must be cause for justified satisfaction to us all. In this respect, the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) last April is an outstanding example and a success story in the unique multilateral endeavour to outlaw a whole category of weapons of mass destruction, provide for their total destruction under strict international control and effectively prevent their proliferation. Now the time has come to translate the spirit and letter of the CWC into reality. It is a challenging task.

Poland is encouraged by the first steps taken, both within the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and at the national level, to implement the Convention. The requisite verification activities have started on time and in accordance with the respective provisions of the Convention. The main organs of the OPCW appear to be operating smoothly. The Executive Council of the Organization is discharging its functions as the principal decision-making body, with an eye to practical aspects of CWC implementation. Its Secretariat also appears to be fully operational in both its administrative and executive functions. The Director-General of the OPCW, Mr. José Mauricio Bustani, has demonstrated a commendable determination to build a most efficient Technical Secretariat for the Organization. We are confident that the good cooperation which now exists between the United Nations and the OPCW will be sustained. It should eventually lead to the conclusion of a formal agreement on the relationship between them, recognizing, *inter alia*, the independent status of the OPCW as an entity discharging a specific task in regard to the CWC.

As far as CWC implementation by States Parties is concerned, Poland — like many other States — has duly and punctually submitted its initial declaration and requisite notification. On the national level, the Polish parliament is preparing domestic legislation with a view to establishing a specific implementation oversight mechanism. Its key feature is to be a national authority charged with day-to-day responsibility for coordination of measures to implement the Convention.

We are confident that, apart from contributing to transparency, openness and confidence, these steps to implement the Convention will encourage other States parties to follow suit soon by submitting their declarations. It goes without saying, of course, that successful achievement of the Convention's objectives depends primarily on adherence to this instrument by all possessors of chemical weapons, as well as by States with significant chemical industries. We strongly urge all States which are still outside the Convention to sign and/or ratify it without further delay.

Poland has been actively engaged in endeavours to achieve a ban on chemical weapons. We shall spare no effort to contribute to a full and effective implementation of and universal adherence to the Convention. In keeping with a practice that has become a time-sanctioned tradition, Canada and Poland will be undertaking an initiative to submit an appropriate draft resolution in this respect for the First Committee's consideration and approval.

Pre-dating the chemical weapons ban is the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention. Designed to proscribe the development, production and stockpiling or acquisition of bacteriological (biological) and toxin weapons and to bring about their destruction, the Convention has lacked effective compliance-verification provisions. This proved to be a major lacuna, whose ominous implications came to be appreciated only in the face of troubling attempts to obtain biological-weapon capacity. Attempts at the subsequent Review Conferences of the Convention to address this shortcoming — through, *inter alia*, various confidence-building measures — have helped to enhance the process of implementation and, as a result, have contributed to the Convention's greater effectiveness. While they have enlarged and strengthened the authority of the Biological Weapons Convention, they obviously fall far short of expectations. Poland therefore commends the efforts currently being made within the open-ended Ad Hoc Group of Governmental Experts to draft recommendations for a legally binding compliance-verification protocol.

The international community will certainly acknowledge important and welcome developments in the nuclear area as well. These, in our view, give credence to a

> "determined pursuit by the nuclear-weapon States of systematic and progressive efforts to reduce nuclear weapons globally, with the ultimate goal of eliminating those weapons" [*NPT/CONF.1995/32 (Part I), Annex, Decision 2, para. 4(c)*].

That language of Decision 2, "Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament," adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), in itself eloquently illustrates the extent of the positive evolution of thinking on nuclear arms. Poland welcomes with gratification the progress made in regard to the further universalization and strengthening of the NPT, which is the mainstay of the nuclear non-proliferation regime and an integral part of the international security system. The recent accessions of Angola, Djibouti and Oman to the Treaty, as well as the stated intention of Brazil to accede make it the most widely adhered to multilateral arms control agreement.

We consider it auspicious that the first of three planned sessions of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the NPT, held in New York last April, made a successful bid to implement a strengthened NPT review process, in keeping with decisions of the 1995 Conference. Poland trusts that the constructive climate and spirit of positive cooperation that prevailed at the first session will also set the ground rules for the second session of the Preparatory Committee, to be convened in April 1998. That is particularly important to my delegation, and to me personally, since, if the States Parties to the NPT so agree, Poland will have the honour of presiding over those proceedings.

Pursuant to the strengthened Treaty review process that was agreed to in 1995, the 2000 Review Conference of the NPT will no doubt wish to make an assessment of whether systematic and progressive efforts to reduce nuclear weapons globally have led to meaningful results. In Poland's view, the assessment will be positive. There are at least two good reasons to justify that view.

First, as we know, at the Helsinki summit meeting last March the United States and Russia made important headway, *inter alia*, on the future of their bilateral strategic nuclear arms reductions. Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin must be commended for their imagination and the sense of responsibility they demonstrated in agreeing that START III would follow START II once the latter was ratified by the Russian Duma. When implemented, the accord will have scaled down the overall numbers of strategic nuclear warheads to a fraction of the peak cold-war levels.

Secondly, the anti-ballistic missile and START II documents that were signed by Secretary of State Albright and Foreign Minister Primakov late last month here in New York should pave the way for the ratification of START II by the Russian Parliament, thus leading to a deep reduction of the nuclear arsenals of the two Powers. Poland is hopeful that the ratification of START II will indeed come very soon and that the important objectives of the Helsinki summit will stand a chance of early realization.

The programme of action referred to in the "Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament" set four specific goals. The completion by the Conference on Disarmament and the subsequent opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in September 1996 met one of those goals. The Treaty has been signed by 148 countries, including all the nuclear-weapon Powers. Of the 44 States required to sign and deposit instruments of ratification in order for the Treaty to go into effect, only three have failed to sign. The international community is hopeful that, in the overriding interests of nuclear non-proliferation and, ultimately, of a nuclear-free world, they will reconsider their position at an early date.

An accelerated rate of CTBT ratification by its signatories would be a telling manifestation that mankind is keen to reap the benefits of the test ban. We therefore welcome with gratification President Clinton's statement at the opening of the general debate in the General Assembly that he would seek early ratification of the Treaty by the United States Senate. For its part, the Government of Poland is also taking steps leading to the ratification of that historic instrument.

In addition, we note with satisfaction the advanced state of preparations made in Vienna to launch the CTBT organization, including its compliance-verification mechanism.

At the same time, it is a matter of concern to my delegation that the second goal specified by the "Principles and Objectives" has again proved elusive. As follows from the annual report of the Conference on Disarmament to the General Assembly, the question of a non-discriminatory and

universally applicable convention to ban the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices has, regrettably, failed again to be addressed by the Conference on Disarmament. This failure is hard to comprehend, given the long-standing agreement to establish a suitable subsidiary organ and indeed the consensus that has emerged on its mandate. The report of the Conference on Disarmament under consideration is not only scant reading, it is also indicative of the fact that, regrettably, the political will did not exist throughout 1997 to make productive use of the time and resources available to the Conference.

As a matter of fact, the linkage of all issues before the Conference — both those with a distinct treaty-negotiating potential, such as the cut-off, and those lacking such potential — into one package must be blamed for the virtual standstill of the Conference's work in 1997. After all, the launching of cut-off negotiations would be consistent with the principles and objectives of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. It would moreover constitute yet another major step towards satisfying the stipulations of article VI of the NPT.

The report of the Conference on Disarmament indicates unmistakably that the Conference has reached a difficult point. There appears to be no meeting of minds as to which practical disarmament goals to pursue with due firmness, dedication and competence. We would wish that the record of its past accomplishment, wisdom and experience will serve that body as a guide to elaborating a pragmatic work programme for 1998.

I would be remiss if I did not commend Secretary-General Kofi Annan for the imaginative view he took of disarmament matters in his report on reform. We could not agree with him more when he states that disarmament these days

> "is a central issue on the global agenda." [A/51/950, para. 122]

We welcome with particular satisfaction the fact that he recognizes that significant progress in disarmament has been made in recent years, yet does not hesitate to alert the international community to the

> "emergence of new dangers and actors"

in the field of peace and international security. These are real, not imagined, challenges.

In concluding, let me stress my delegation's confidence that under your able leadership, Sir, the First Committee will be able to set the right course for fruitful disarmament endeavours in the days ahead. We trust that this Committee will be able to formulate far-sighted recommendations and provide realistic guidance both to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva and to other forums where disarmament concerns are pursued by the international community. For its part, Poland is determined to bring its good will, flexibility and dedication to the search for the ultimate goals of the disarmament efforts.

Mr. Campbell (Australia): I congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of this Committee. We know you have the skill and energy required to lead the Committee through its debate and subsequent adoption of resolutions. You will have our full support.

This has been a year of mixed successes and setbacks for the international community in the area of disarmament, non-proliferation and international security. In previous years there were outstanding events to applaud, such as the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the General Assembly's adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) after dedicated and prolonged negotiation.

Characterizing 1997 is more difficult. Our successes, while important, have been less spectacular. This year we have focused on the essential ratification, implementation, institutionalizing, strengthening and locking-in of existing, landmark treaties. There have been significant achievements — the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention, the start-up of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization Preparatory Commission, the strengthened International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards and Convention on Nuclear Safety, the conclusion of negotiations on a convention banning anti-personnel landmines, the United Kingdom's ratification of the South Pacific Nuclear-Free Zone Treaty protocols, following that of France in late 1996, the Almaty Declaration on a Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone, as well as laudable work-in-progress, such as the negotiations to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention and the first Preparatory Committee for the year 2000 NPT Review Conference.

But there is also a continuing problem which we, the concerned international community, must address without delay. We have, admittedly, spent a great deal of time discussing where in the area of nuclear disarmament we should next turn our attention. Australia, like many others

in this room, cannot but regret the fact that the Conference on Disarmament has struggled throughout the year. In the Conference on Disarmament we cannot afford another lay year like 1997, when there are important issues to address.

Of highest priority to Australia is the need to negotiate and conclude a fissile material cut-off treaty. The overwhelming majority of delegations represented here committed themselves to commencing its immediate negotiation in the context of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference programme of action — a decision that was confirmed at the first Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference. In the Conference on Disarmament there is an almost across-the-board willingness to participate in negotiations on a cut-off treaty. In fact, the commencement of negotiations on cut-off has attracted more support than any other issue on the Conference's agenda. That level of agreement is both rare and valuable. The reasons for it are easy to understand.

Cut-off is an important corollary to the completed CTBT, as, among other benefits, it would prohibit the production of fissile material for weapons purposes. It is the next logical step on the path towards the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons. It also, quite frankly, is the issue most ripe for a multilateral nuclear-disarmament negotiation. That is, it is clearly in the province of the Conference, requiring action and obligations from a far broader range of States than the nuclear-weapon States alone. Further, the Conference on Disarmament has an existing consensus on a balanced negotiating mandate for an ad hoc committee that would allow discussion across the full range of issues relating to a cut-off treaty.

Australia remains deeply disappointed that, after years of striving toward the objective of a commencement to negotiations, it appears that the reservations of a fraction of the Conference's membership are bogging the Conference down on this front.

Cut-off has been widely recognized as an important measure in the arms-control expert community. I refer, for example, to the report of the Canberra Commission, which identified cut-off as a valuable and urgent "reinforcing step" towards the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons. The Commission concluded that ending the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices would require the dismantlement or placement under international safeguards of all enrichment and reprocessing plants in the nuclear-weapon States and in undeclared weapons States and threshold States. A cut-off treaty therefore has the potential to serve the security interests of all members of the international community: nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States, NPT parties and non-NPT parties.

This is surely an outcome for which it is worth putting aside our differences. It would constitute a real and tangible step towards nuclear disarmament and another brick in the wall we must all strive to build against the dangers of proliferation. Australia calls upon other committed delegations to help us prepare the ground for the commencement of negotiations as soon as the Conference resumes in 1998.

There is no doubt that the international community, Governments, the press and non-government organizations have been seized by how best to deal with the appalling human tragedy caused by anti-personnel landmines. This pervasive and multidimensional problem has captured the attention of the entire world in recent years.

The Convention recently concluded in Oslo represents a significant development in efforts to ban the scourge of anti-personnel landmines. The Ottawa treaty is one of the gains which have been made to date on anti-personnel landmines, along with the important if partial progress achieved through revised Protocol II of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), through national and regional measures, and, importantly, through enhanced contributions to demining and mine-victim assistance programmes.

It is the view of Australia that a truly global and effective ban on anti-personnel landmines will be achieved only when major users, producers and exporters are brought in a practical and concrete way into the march towards the goal of a total and comprehensive ban. Australia will continue to pursue this goal in all appropriate forums, including in the Conference on Disarmament and the enhanced CCW review process. We strongly urge all States parties to accept revised Protocol II of the CCW as a matter of priority. Australia did so on 22 August this year.

I can promise that Australia will not be sitting on its hands as we continue to explore the combination of possible approaches which may form the solution to this devastating problem. Australia will continue to respond in an urgent and practical manner to the humanitarian disaster caused by landmines. Since May 1996, Australia has pledged over $19 million (Australian) to regional and international mine-related assistance programmes. This has included demining, development of important new mine-detection technology,

and rehabilitation work. A global ban is essential to stop new mines being laid, but those in a position to help must not forget the 110 million mines already laid.

In preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, our efforts must also focus on strengthening nascent and current arms-control regimes. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the negotiations under way to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) through the development of an effective verification mechanism. As disturbing events have shown, the BWC was considerably weakened by its lack of an effective verification regime. From the Australian perspective, any violation of the BWC which impacted on our geographical region could have disastrous effects. The very introduction of an insidious weapon of mass destruction would be politically destabilizing. In the event of the use or accidental release of biological weapons, Australia could expect, in addition to the enormous human cost, a devastating effect on agriculture — an important part of the Australian economy and other economies in the South-East Asian region. I know that these concerns are widely shared.

Australia has worked closely with delegations across the geo-political spectrum in the negotiations taking place in the Ad Hoc Group in Geneva, and we note with satisfaction the progress achieved to date. Under the skilled chairmanship of Ambassador Tóth, a quantum step forward has been achieved through the adoption of negotiations based on a rolling text. The negotiation has also attracted the welcome interest and support of non-governmental organizations and academia as well as the vital cooperation of the industrial sectors of many countries.

The successful conclusion of the negotiation of a verification protocol to the BWC would offer the international community enhanced peace and security. Governments of States parties would have increased confidence that they were not unwittingly being implicated in the proliferation of biological weapons. A sound negotiation in which stakeholders' interests are taken properly into account would provide reassurance to key players in our national economies that the practical application of a verification regime would assist rather than intrude. Economic sectors vulnerable to biological weapons, such as agriculture, would profit from greater security. For all these reasons, Australia welcomes the increase in negotiating time being allocated to the BWC Ad Hoc Group in 1998. Australia looks forward to working closely with Ambassador Tóth and delegations to achieve more of the steady and creditable gains made during 1997.

Australia is also pleased at the progress made towards consolidating and rendering more effective other arms control regimes and their associated institutions created by the international community in recent years. Australia welcomed the establishment of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization and is gratified by the progress it made in its initial year, especially the steps taken to bring vital aspects of the Treaty's verification regime into early operation. At the same time, we need to bear in mind that the Treaty's entry into force at the earliest time must remain a major goal for the international community. To that end, we encourage those States which have signed to take the next step of ratification as early as possible, and we implore those States yet to sign to consider the important contribution to world disarmament they would make in so doing. Australia hopes to be in a position to ratify the CTBT before the next General Assembly.

Australia would also like to add its voice to those of other delegations which have welcomed the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). The initial declarations made by States parties under article III of the Convention have yielded a practical and tangible security benefit for the international community.

Like others, Australia is working hard to ensure the effective operation of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in The Hague. As with the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, the reach and effectiveness of the Convention will be closely related to the viability of the institution we have created to support it. In this context, we strongly urge States which have not yet done so to ratify the Convention as soon as possible. Russia's international standing and its key role in the implementation of the Convention mean that its early ratification of the Convention is an issue of particularly high priority not only to Australia but to the whole international community.

It has been pleasing to note the successful and constructive start this year to preparations for the sixth Review and Extension Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, to be held in the millennium year. The series of decisions which accompanied the indefinite extension, together with the mandates emerging or likely to emerge for the resumed review process is presenting the international community with an exacting agenda. Australia believes that the first Preparatory Committee laid the basis for a qualitatively different and improved treaty review process, one of our principal objectives. We look forward to working with

other supporters of the NPT to building on that basis at the 1998 Preparatory Committee.

With regard to the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Australia was one of those countries most engaged in developing the strengthened safeguards model. It is with some pride that I note that Australia was the first Member State to conclude and sign a bilateral protocol with the IAEA incorporating the new measures into our safeguards. But to make the new protocol a living, operational reality, we ask other States also to adopt the protocol as the new standard for safeguards agreements with the IAEA as soon as possible. In that way, the common objective of a strengthened system can be realized.

Turning now to the Conference on Disarmament, it is with considerable frustration that Australia has witnessed the lumbering and convulsive attempts of the Conference on Disarmament to find an appropriate role for itself post-CTBT. To an extent, a period of soul-searching was inevitable after the conclusion of the CTBT negotiations last year. But now the Conference is in urgent need of regeneration. Further prolonged inaction would be corrosive to its standing, relevance and expertise.

The Conference on Disarmament has been the central forum for the two major post-cold-war arms control negotiations: those on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and on the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction. Both negotiations required the geopolitical representativeness, the depth of disarmament understanding, knowledge and memory and the in-house negotiating skill that the Conference on Disarmament uniquely offers. No doubt, arms control and disarmament negotiations can take place anywhere — and indeed have in the past been conducted outside the Conference on Disarmament — but the Conference on Disarmament can provide the global scope to strike the right combination of checks and balances which guarantees the broadest possible participation in and adherence to arms control regimes.

I know that all delegations in the Conference on Disarmament fervently wish to see the work of the Conference make progress next year. Our task therefore is to surmount the differences which stand in the way of the practical and realistic disarmament and non-proliferation achievements which the Conference on Disarmament can deliver.

The question of how to deal with nuclear disarmament was a major cause of the log jam in the Conference on Disarmament this year. Like other countries represented here, Australia is committed to the pursuit, through concrete interlocking steps, of the ultimate objective of global nuclear disarmament. We are not one of those delegations that deny a role for multilateralism in nuclear disarmament. On the contrary, support for the CTBT and for the prospective cut-off negotiations shows that the multilateral disarmament machinery can and must play a role in securing the intermediate reinforcing environment for nuclear disarmament. The final phase of the elimination of nuclear weapons will inevitably be a multilateral endeavour. But we look to the nuclear-weapon States themselves, consistent with their obligations under article VI of the NPT, to reverse the nuclear accumulations of the cold war as a necessary prelude to the elimination of nuclear weapons. The draw-down in cold-war nuclear weapons stockpiles is at last taking place, but we do not see how attempting to prematurely multilateralize this preliminary phase can do anything but complicate and retard progress.

Australia welcomed the agreement reached at Helsinki between President Clinton and President Yeltsin on guidelines for START III. Australia also takes this opportunity to urge the Russian Federation to ratify START II so that countries can move expeditiously forward to further deep cuts in their nuclear arsenals under START III.

Australia has been grateful for the many positive comments passed to its representatives and made in public debate throughout the year on the report of the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. It is a source of satisfaction to the Australian Government that the report has been a tool to stimulate positive discussion on the feasibility of nuclear disarmament and on the steps required to get there.

While I am on the subject of international disarmament debate, this is an appropriate opportunity to express Australia's support for the work being done through United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament, notably the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific in Kathmandu. We agree with the Secretary-General's recent assessment that the Centre's mandate remains valid and that it can and, we believe, does play an important role in promoting informed debate and a climate of cooperation and disarmament in the Asia-Pacific region in the post-cold-war era. Australia was

pleased to be able to participate this year in a Kathmandu seminar on the CTBT.

We also commend the Government of Japan and concerned Japanese organizations for their assiduous sponsorship of debate in our region on non-proliferation and disarmament issues.

Australia has welcomed and supported the progressive and far-reaching efforts of the Secretary-General in his approach to United Nations reform. In principle we endorse Mr. Annan's intention to strengthen the Centre for Disarmament to work with the arms control community towards better implementation of existing instruments and towards promoting universal adherence to them. We are confident that the diplomacy and good offices of the Secretary-General will be able to complement, without duplicating, the functions of existing treaty bodies and associated institutions such as the International Atomic Energy Agency, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the CTBT Organization and the enhanced NPT review process.

We also support the Secretary-General's proposal for considering some updating, rationalization and streamlining of the First Committee and the Disarmament Commission. While Australia values the opportunity offered by both those bodies for exchanges of views and exploration of the issues confronting us, we urge a continuous effort towards tightly focused and outcome-oriented exchanges. Why say the same thing twice on two different occasions when once would do? Why produce conclusions and recommendations which a body of similar competence and identical membership has concluded and recommended already? Given the urgent, concrete and practical arms control measures which need to be adopted and implemented, we frankly do not have the luxury or the resources to indulge in exercises of that kind.

In this context, we also question the utility of the First Committee's structured debate which, regrettably, has evolved into a rehashing of general statements rather than a constructive discussion of particular proposals. It is for this reason that Australia will resist as best it can participation in this year's structured debate, and will devote its energies instead to the negotiation and refinement of our product: the draft resolutions we will adopt.

We would also prefer to see a diminution in the number of draft resolutions submitted in the First Committee each year, through a conscientious effort to biennialize draft resolutions which are important but not urgent, to merge draft resolutions dealing with similar subjects and to reduce the number of routine requests for reports from the Secretary-General, some of which are of questionable utility. This would give the Committee more time for serious negotiations to try to overcome the philosophical differences that hamper the international work of disarmament and non-proliferation, and would also free up Secretariat resources for more productive work.

Australia is looking forward to a constructive and useful session of the First Committee that will leave behind the divisive rhetoric of the 1997 session of the Conference on Disarmament, allowing us instead to seriously consider and debate the issues which warrant our attention in 1998. It is imperative that we now roll up our sleeves and get down to work.

The Chairman: I call on the observer for the Holy See.

Archbishop Martino (Holy See): The Holy See joins in the congratulations extended to you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of this important Committee. We also extend our best wishes to the other members of the Bureau in advance of their election.

As the world approaches the millennium, many people and organizations are already casting their eyes towards the opening years of the twenty-first century. Will the next century be a time of peace, the fruit of the blossoming of human intelligence and human love? We can draw a measure of hope that peace will be our accomplishment in the years ahead from the achievements of the past few years: the ending of the cold war; reductions in military forces in Europe; the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction; reductions in nuclear weapons by the two foremost nuclear-weapon States; the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons; the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty; and the adoption of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. These achievements are steps that have moved the world closer to peace, and the First Committee has played a role in that success.

But can we say that the course to peace is clear? Unfortunately, we cannot. Every day, conflict and violence still produce victims. Genocide, the slaughter of innocents, and attacks on vulnerable populations continue to scar the landscape. The arms trade, particularly in conventional

weapons, only adds to the bloodshed in many warring countries.

Indeed, in recent conflicts more people have been killed by short-range small weapons than by weapons of mass destruction. The tragedy of this trend is that more human beings, including children, are forced to wage war. In addition, these wars are often prolonged by the use of short-range small weapons. Most developing countries where conflict situations exist are abundantly supplied with such weapons. In spite of this fact, weapons of mass destruction are still produced in great quantity. Nuclear weapons, aptly described as "the ultimate evil", are still possessed by the most powerful States, which refuse to let go of them.

These searing facts of militarism remind us how far the world still has to go to claim universal peace. The world is paying a high price for the "culture of war" that has characterized the twentieth century. Even now, nearly a decade after the end of the cold war, the world's Governments spend more than $800 billion a year to support military forces of more than 27 million soldiers. While this is a decline in spending since the cold war high in 1987, most of the decline has come from the sharp drop in spending by the former Warsaw Pact nations. Despite the end of the cold war, developed nations, other than the East European countries, spend only 10 per cent less than they did in 1987. Military expenditures of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries are now more than 10 times the expenditures of the former Warsaw Pact countries. Not only are the developed countries big military spenders, but they are also responsible for 90 per cent of the $22 billion annual arms trade. The dangerous global proliferation of arms and weapons technology has contributed to inciting and prolonging armed conflicts raging in different locations around the world.

For their part, the developing countries currently spend $221 billion on armed forces. This spending is a considerable drain on these nations' already limited resources. New weapons procurement and larger armies mean fewer funds to invest in health, education, economic development and other urgent social needs of large and vulnerable populations. Some 1.3 billion people are so poor that they cannot meet their basic needs for food and shelter. Sixty percent of humanity lives on less than $2 a day. Despite some remarkable successes in human development in some fast-growing economies, more than 100 countries are worse off today than they were 15 years ago. Each year between 13 and 18 million people, most of them children, die from hunger and poverty-related causes.

Sustainable development needs huge amounts of investment in scientific research, technological development, education and training, infrastructure development and the transfer of technology. Investment in these structural advances is urgently needed to stop carbon dioxide poisoning of the atmosphere and the depletion of the earth's biological resources such as the forests, wetlands and animal species now under attack.

As the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) put it, it is clear that "we cannot simultaneously pay the price of war and the price of peace". Budgetary priorities need to be realigned in order to direct financial resources to enhancing life, not producing death. A transformation of political attitudes is needed to build a culture of peace. A new political attitude would say "no" to investment in arms and destruction and "yes" to investment in the construction of peace. The relationship between disarmament and development, given short shrift by Governments since the United Nations Conference for the Promotion of International Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy in 1987, must be emphasized anew. In that relationship, a process of disarmament providing security at progressively lower levels of armaments could allow more resources to be devoted to development; correspondingly, the development process enhances security and can promote disarmament.

Such an approach to human security by Governments would lead to the fulfilment of the right to peace, which every person in every culture can claim. No less a goal than the right to live in peace will suffice for the new millennium.

The international community, once awakened, has shown that it can indeed move to strengthen human security. The work fostered by the Ottawa process in producing a treaty banning the production, export and use of anti-personnel landmines reflects the strengths of compassion and political action. The Holy See commends this initiative and urges universal support for the treaty. Pope John Paul II has appealed for the definitive cessation of the manufacture and use of these insidious arms, which strike cruelly and indiscriminately at civilian populations. Signing the new treaty will not be enough, however. Equal attention should be given to the detection and removal of the 100 million deployed landmines that continue to kill and maim 26,000 innocent people every year. More resources should be devoted to demining efforts.

If biological weapons, chemical weapons, and now landmines can be eliminated, so too can nuclear weapons. No weapons so threaten the longed-for peace of the twenty-first century as do nuclear arms. Let not the immensity of this task dissuade us from the efforts needed to free humanity from such a scourge. With the valuable admonition offered in the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice, the international community can now see how the legal and moral arguments against nuclear weapons intertwine with the strategic: since nuclear weapons can destroy all life on the planet, they imperil all that humanity has ever stood for — and indeed, humanity itself. During the acrimonious years of the cold war, with the emphasis on the military doctrine of nuclear deterrence as a constant justification for the nuclear arms build-up, the international community felt powerless to stop the relentless build-up of nuclear weapons. But now, in the post-cold war era characterized by new partnerships, the international community cannot shield itself from the assault on life itself that nuclear weapons represent. The work that this Committee has done in calling for negotiations leading to a nuclear weapons convention must be stepped up. Those nuclear-weapon States resisting such negotiations must be challenged, for in clinging to their outmoded rationales for nuclear deterrence they are denying the most ardent aspirations of humanity as well as the opinion of the highest legal authority in the world. The gravest consequences for humankind lie ahead if the world is to be ruled by the militarism which nuclear weapons represent rather than by the humanitarian law espoused by the International Court of Justice.

Nuclear weapons are incompatible with the peace we seek for the twenty-first century. They cannot be justified. They deserve condemnation. The preservation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty demands an unequivocal commitment to their abolition.

The Holy See has previously stated in this Committee:

> "The world must move to the abolition of nuclear weapons through a universal, non-discriminatory ban, with intensive inspection by a universal authority." [See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-seventh Session, First Committee*, 20th meeting]

Today we repeat those words, conscious that there is a gathering momentum of world opinion in support of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. This is a moral challenge, a legal challenge and a political challenge. That multiple-based challenge must be met by the application of our humanity.

Ms. Arystanbekova (Kazakhstan) (*interpretation from Russian*): Allow me, Sir, to join those who have congratulated you on your election to the responsible position of Chairman of the First Committee, and to express my conviction that, under your guidance, the First Committee will take the best possible decisions on the broad range of issues relating to disarmament and international security on its agenda.

The report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the work of the Organization states:

> "In the past 12 months, significant progress in arms regulation and disarmament has been achieved through multilateral treaty-making, in several cases through the Conference on Disarmament." [A/52/1, para. 90]

This accomplishment is, without doubt, the result of all of the efforts of the international community to achieve a nuclear-free world and to strengthen international security.

Kazakhstan attaches the greatest importance to the decisions and resolutions of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and supports efforts to encourage full compliance with and the effective implementation of that Treaty. As a party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, our country is firmly committed to the non-proliferation regime, and believes it necessary actively to contribute to its further strengthening. We note with satisfaction the beginning of a new review process for the Treaty, and hope that the first session of the Preparatory Committee, which took place in April this year, and further steps leading to the Review Conference in the year 2000, will help to ensure that the Non-Proliferation Treaty will be universal in nature. We believe that there is a need to revitalize efforts to establish legally binding international instruments so as to provide the non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the Treaty with safeguards against the threat or use of nuclear weapons.

The Republic of Kazakhstan firmly supports the goals of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We believe that the signing of this document was one of the most important historic events of the century. Adherence to this Treaty by the overwhelming majority of Member States has been a qualitatively new step in strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime. We call upon all States to join in the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We believe that the time has come for strict compliance with the Treaty

and that a global monitoring system should be established and introduced as soon as possible.

Our country has felt the full force of the catastrophic consequences of nuclear tests over a period of more than 40 years at the Semipalatinsk test site — the largest such area in the world — over 470 nuclear explosions took place, or some 70 per cent of all the nuclear tests conducted in the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Enormous harm has been done to the health of the people and to the environment of Kazakhstan. The decision of the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbaev, to close the Semipalatinsk testing ground should be seen as a major contribution to nuclear disarmament and an act of historical significance. In September this year, half a century after the Semipalatinsk testing ground began operations, an International Conference on Problems of Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons took place in Almaty and Kurchatov at the initiative of our Head of State. Addressing the participants, the President of Kazakhstan stated:

> "Since achieving independence, our country has made its views on nuclear weapons absolutely clear. While we had them on our territory we never attempted to use the situation for any political purposes. The clear and firm position of Kazakhstan has been reasserted through a number of concrete actions. All nuclear warheads have been withdrawn from our Republic. We have become a non-nuclear-weapon State party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The nuclear-weapon States have given Kazakhstan comprehensive guarantees for its safety and territorial integrity."

Many countries participated in the Conference, as did the United Nations, the International Atomic Energy Agency and other international organizations. The Conference discussed political and technical issues pertaining to the non-proliferation regime and the problems of converting former test sites and their infrastructures. Issues relating to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia were also examined. The problems of radiation safety and the rehabilitation of land formerly used as a test site were a further topic of discussion.

In a message to participants at the Conference, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, emphasized:

> "This Conference is one of a number of important steps towards a nuclear-free world ... The world community knows that nuclear tests have caused an extended area of Kazakhstan to be affected by nuclear radiation with significant deterioration of the environment. This problem requires international attention. Non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons ... are important items on the agenda of the international community."

The final Declaration of the Conference states:

> "The Conference gave experts with different approaches to solving proliferation problems the opportunity to exchange their views, to share experience of different countries and organizations directed to strengthening the non-proliferation regime ... The participants hope that the Conference contributed significantly to the understanding of the problems related to strengthening non-proliferation and hope that progress was achieved in mutual understanding between the participating countries."

The strengthening of ecological security is an extremely important issue for the Central Asian region. Accordingly, at a meeting in Almaty in February of this year, the Heads of the Central Asian States adopted a declaration proclaiming 1998 a Year of Environmental Protection in our region, and stating the need to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia that other regions can join. We are grateful to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his support for the idea of establishing such a zone, as expressed in his address to the participants of the Conference in Kazakhstan.

Further implementation of the idea of a nuclear-weapon-free zone and its significance for strengthening regional security were discussed at the International Conference in Tashkent held from 14 to 16 September this year.

The history of the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones has shown that they can be a really effective factor in reducing tensions and establishing proper conditions for development in a region. At the same time, we understand that, taking into account the difficulty of establishing our nuclear-weapon-free zone, we need a detailed and careful study of all related questions. Therefore, Kazakhstan considers that there is a need for gradual, consistent work in this area.

The Republic of Kazakhstan actively supports the efforts of the International Atomic Energy Agency to

strengthen the system of guarantees. Facilities in Kazakhstan which come under the guarantees have begun to implement the measures under Part 1 of the 93 + 2 Programme. In our Republic we have developed and now operate a State system for inventory and control of nuclear materials. All the activities of Kazakhstan in the area of verification of nuclear materials are regulated by a national law on export control and a recently enacted law on the use of atomic energy.

Kazakhstan continues to believe that there is a need to conclude a convention to ban the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices.

We have adopted a decision to establish a national body to implement the provisions of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC). We are considering the ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention in order to ensure full participation of Kazakhstan in the non-proliferation regime for chemical weapons.

Recognizing the key role of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty of 26 May 1972 within the structure of current arms control Treaties, and its significance for reducing strategic offensive weapons, Kazakhstan has stated that it will adhere to the Treaty and take part in negotiations in the Standing Consultative Commission to adapt it to new political realities and to provide agreements to limit strategic and non-strategic anti-ballistic missiles. A result of the Commission's productive work was the signing on 25 September this year in New York by the Foreign Ministers of Belarus, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation, the United States and Ukraine of four related documents on a multilateral format for the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty which will allow us to resolve a number of important security issues. These agreements will play a positive role in cooperation between the parties in the area of security. These documents are fully in keeping with the strategic interests of Kazakhstan, which is unswervingly trying to make its contribution to strengthening regional and global security and stability.

We recognize the enormous importance of reducing conventional weapons, particularly those which have excessively injurious or indiscriminate effects, and on 6 August this year our Government adopted a unilateral moratorium on the export of anti-personnel landmines, including their re-export and transport. This represents an important contribution by Kazakhstan to the efforts of the international community to limit the use of anti-personnel landmines and access to them and eventually to ban their use completely.

Continuing armed conflicts in various regions of the world with the use of conventional weapons makes ever more urgent the establishment of effective control over the spread of such weapons. While we support international efforts to settle regional conflicts, the Republic of Kazakhstan is making its own contribution to steps to improve machinery to control conventional weapons, and had submitted the necessary information for inclusion in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms since 1992.

Kazakhstan, like other States, has expressed an interest in active participation in the work of multilateral disarmament machinery, first and foremost in the Conference on Disarmament. In this connection, we believe that the Conference on Disarmament should, as soon as possible, consider the inclusion of new members on the basis of political and geographical balance, also taking into account the contribution of each candidate country to the disarmament process.

The Republic of Kazakhstan has been consistently working to strengthen security and stability at the regional level. Our country notes with satisfaction the growing understanding of the initiative put forward by the President of Kazakhstan, Mr. Nazarbaev, at the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly to convene a conference on security and confidence-building measures in Asia. On 5 November we plan to hold in Almaty another regular meeting of participants at Deputy Foreign Minister level. Representatives of more than 20 Asian States and of international organizations will take part. I should like to take this opportunity once again to express gratitude to the United Nations for supporting this initiative of the President of Kazakhstan.

A major achievement in international security is, we feel the signing of agreements between Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan and the People's Republic of China on confidence-building measures and measures to reduce armed forces in border areas.

Items put forward for discussion in the First Committee are of exceptional importance for the world community. We believe that decisions taken here should promote, to the maximum extent, the strengthening of the non-proliferation regime and ensure peace and security at the regional and global levels. The delegation of

Kazakhstan is prepared to continue constructive cooperation with delegations of Member States in order to achieve these noble goals.

Mr. Skračić (Croatia): On behalf of the Croatian delegation, allow me, Sir, to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your assumption of your important position. My delegation wishes to assure you of its full support and cooperation in the fulfilment of the responsibilities entrusted to you. We are convinced that with your guidance the work of the First Committee will move along its desired course and conclude successfully.

Multilateral treaties and their verifying mechanisms represent the basis for the achievement of our disarmament goals and objectives, including the strengthening of international peace and security and social and economic development. In this respect, the United Nations faces an increasing work load. Some efforts are successful, others are not. While constructive progress in some fields of disarmament has been achieved over the past 12 months, progress in others is slower, sometimes even deadlocked, as this year's session of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva has shown.

On a bright note, the Chemical Weapons Convention came into force on 29 April 1997 and has now been ratified by almost a hundred States. The 1997 Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) added the necessary momentum to the process of arms control and nuclear non-proliferation. The drive for a global ban on anti-personnel landmines has been accelerated through the Ottawa process, and a comprehensive Convention will be open for signature in December.

Of all the disarmament issues on our agenda, nuclear non-proliferation and the elimination of nuclear weapons is the most important issue of the day. A combination of bilateral and multilateral efforts has enabled us to enter a new phase in the process, as the adoption and opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has shown. But there are still many important issues on this agenda.

The indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 1995 has been followed up by some positive action during this year's Preparatory Committee, which includes the adoption, in June this year, of strengthened safeguards. My delegation was especially pleased to see strong support for the reaffirmation of the universality of the NPT, and calls for its full implementation in all its aspects. Croatia strongly believes that the NPT offers the only true universal mechanism to curb nuclear proliferation, which represents movement towards the ultimate goal of nuclear disarmament.

We are concerned about the fact that some threshold States continue to refuse to commit themselves to nuclear non-proliferation, especially in the light of the latest initiatives by some nuclear Powers to accelerate the nuclear disarmament process. On the other hand, considering the efforts many non-nuclear States have made to turn their regions into nuclear-weapon-free zones, and taking into consideration the International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion on the legality of the use by a State of nuclear weapons in armed conflict, my delegation believes that a binding document on non-first use would significantly contribute to the disarmament process.

Croatia also supports early negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty as one of the next steps in the nuclear disarmament measures identified in the 1995 principles and objectives programme of action. My delegation believes that the momentum created over recent years with regard to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament should not be held hostage to unrealized, and in some cases unrealistic, demands and that the best way to further the cause of nuclear non-proliferation is to proceed one step at a time. In this respect, Croatia would like to see these efforts bring concrete positive results, so that the momentum for nuclear non-proliferation can be sustained.

The Chemical Weapons Convention entered into force on 29 April 1997. My delegation would like once again to express its satisfaction over the enthusiasm with which many States have embraced this Convention and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. Croatia acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention in January 1993, and the Croatian Parliament ratified it in March 1995.

Croatia, one of the original States parties to the Convention, has never possessed nor planned to possess or produce chemical weapons. Croatia has taken further steps to ensure that the Chemical Weapons Convention will be fully implemented on its territory, by establishing a Government commission as a focal point for coordination with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, as well as with other Member States. Recently, my delegation showed its support for the Organization by co-sponsoring resolution 51/230 on cooperation between the

United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

Croatia is carefully following the work of the Ad Hoc Group aimed at strengthening the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction. My delegation welcomes and supports the efforts of the Ad Hoc Group, and is especially eager to see a successful end to the drafting of a legally binding verification regime which would take into account the interests of all countries. In this regard, my delegation fully supports the proposal put forward by the Netherlands in the Ad Hoc Group concerning the establishment of a specialized verification regime modelled on the CTBT and the Chemical Weapons Convention, and would welcome the adoption of such a regime in 1998.

In May 1996 the Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons amended Protocol II on landmines. This was surely a significant step, but one that did not fulfil all expectations. Given the seriousness with which many States have approached the problem of drafting a comprehensive treaty banning the production as well as the transfer, stockpiling and use of landmines, my delegation has extended, and will continue to extend, its full support to the Ottawa process.

Croatia welcomes the recent decision of the Oslo Diplomatic Conference on antipersonnel landmines to adopt the text of the global treaty banning this weapon, a treaty which Croatia expects to sign at the earliest opportunity. Croatia has played an active role in this process from the beginning, and has reinforced its commitment by placing its own unilateral moratoria on the production, transfer, stockpiling and use of anti-personnel landmines.

Croatia regrets the fact that some of the largest users and producers of landmines have not fully or at all engaged in this process. My delegation regrets that the Conference on Disarmament has been unable to make any significant progress in this regard. Complementary efforts on the part of the Conference on Disarmament would certainly have strengthened the Ottawa process, making it much more difficult for States to justify using and producing anti-personnel landmines.

Croatia's emphasis on and concern with the global landmine problem has been deepened by its tragic war experience. The hundreds and thousands of mines laid in our former occupied territories continue to be the direct cause of many tragedies, especially among civilians. The demining of these areas is a difficult process, which, despite our best efforts, will take many years. Presently, the Croatian Government Commission on Demining is engaged in a number of demining projects throughout the country, while in the near future Croatia will be establishing a Mine Action Centre to take over the responsibilities of the United Nations Mine Action Centre. Moreover, demining experts in Croatia are working on a detailed survey to determine the best course for further action. Unfortunately, a lack of trained personnel and specialized equipment means that the process cannot move faster.

Nevertheless, my delegation would like to reiterate the words of our Foreign Minister in expressing Croatia's gratitude to all those who have thus far provided financial and other aid towards alleviating the landmine problem in Croatia, as well as to make a further appeal for aid — material, financial or professional — which can help us expedite the demining process. Also, my delegation would like to express its appreciation for the efforts of the United Nations Mine Action Centre in Zagreb and the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs in helping launch this programme.

Bilateral agreements and regional associations, like the Organization for Security and Cooperation (OSCE) in Europe, the Organization of African Unity and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, are increasingly engaged in promoting peace and stability, as well as trying to prevent conflicts between or within States in their regions.

I should like to stress that Croatia takes its regional and local disarmament commitments very seriously. Croatia has already fulfilled its obligations under Annex 1-B of Article IV of the Dayton Peace Agreement on sub-regional arms control, and Croatia regularly fulfils its obligations in regard to Vienna Document-94 on reporting to the OSCE on military holdings. Croatia has also fulfilled its requirements pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 51/38, on standardized reporting of military expenditure, and 51/45 H, on transparency in armaments, by submitting its national reports in September 1997. In addition, the process of transforming and modernizing Croatia's armed forces to North Atlantic Treaty Organization standards is proceeding steadily, but is limited by its present financial constraints. Hopefully, this process will be completed by the end of the decade.

On the local level, as part of the confidence-building measures in the concluding stages of the peaceful

reintegration of Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium into the rest of country, Croatia has been approached to consider the possibility of establishing a permanent demilitarized zone along this border region with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

My Government has on a number of occasions openly stated that it shall favour such an approach but that, for any successful demilitarization of the border region between Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to occur, it is necessary that similar action be taken by the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. This action on the part of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has not been forthcoming and, as a result, negotiations on the possible demilitarization of this region have not proceeded further.

In closing, my delegation should like to address the question of membership in the Conference on Disarmament. Croatia welcomes the recent debate in the Conference with regard to its further expansion, including the appointment of Ambassador Harald Kreid of Austria as Special Coordinator for that purpose. My delegation believes that the Conference on Disarmament, as a subsidiary body of the General Assembly, should respect the wishes of all prospective new members and therefore shares the opinion already expressed by many States members of the Conference that further expansion of its membership will serve only to add to its wealth of experience and expertise and will in no way negatively affect its programme of work. The process of expansion should proceed in a comprehensive manner, accepting without prejudice all new prospective members.

In this regard, my delegation regrets that paragraph 2 of General Assembly resolution 51/47 A, which calls on the Conference on Disarmament to consider all remaining applications for membership with a view to reaching a decision on its further enlargement before the end of its 1997 session, has not been fulfilled. In the same light, my delegation should like to express its appreciation to all those delegations which have supported this non-discriminatory approach on expansion of the Conference. Croatia hopes that this position will prevail and that it will be given the opportunity to make its contribution to the Conference on Disarmament as a full member in the near future.

Mr. Pérez-Otermin (Uruguay) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The delegation of Uruguay congratulates you, Sir, on your election to lead the work of the First Committee. You can count on my delegation's cooperation and support in your important tasks.

I wish to point out that, without prejudice to the statements that are made jointly with the Rio Group and others that will be made in the structured debate on behalf of the Southern Cone Common Market, my delegation wishes to make some comments on disarmament and international security.

At the last session of the General Assembly, we were pleased to note the progress achieved in the field of nuclear disarmament — the details of which are broadly known — that began with the signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, of which Uruguay was one of the first signatories.

In February this year in Mexico City, we celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which marked a historical landmark as the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in the world. Latin America and the Caribbean proudly hold up this Treaty as proof of the need to liberate the international community from the dangers of the existence of nuclear weapons. It reminds us of the urgent need to eliminate these weapons, which have been and continue to be a threat to mankind for more than half a century.

After endlessly protested delays, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction was acceded to by the United States. This is one of the contributions that we are very pleased to highlight. Other States, regrettably, have yet to sign it and we urge them to decide themselves soon in this regard. The implementation of some aspects of full compliance with the Convention also remains of concern to my Government.

Unfortunately, palpable progress has not yet been achieved in the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The appeal of the international community for a comprehensive approach covering the horizontal, vertical and qualitative dimensions continues to go unheeded because of the voracity of producers and traders.

We cannot believe that the nuclear Powers are resigned to the fact that the world nuclear arsenal will not be completely eliminated from the face of the Earth until the year 2025. This is not very encouraging. We agree with those pacifists who maintain that, while the twentieth century saw the birth of nuclear weapons, the twenty-first will see their complete destruction. It is more than unfortunate to note that resources continue to be diverted from and not channelled into the development projects that humanity so sorely needs. We have not yet been able to

eliminate the danger of a nuclear holocaust and my country therefore remains committed to the complete and definitive destruction of nuclear weapons.

In this regard, Uruguay considers the Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic to be an area for active cooperation and a link between the countries of the zone in the use of the oceans and the exploitation of their resources within the ambit of United Nations conventions on this issue. We therefore insist on the denuclearization of the South Atlantic. We believe that harmonizing the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Pelindaba, Rarotonga and Bangkok provide the legal variety to pave the way to achieving this aspiration.

At the regional level, we are concerned by the recent decision of the Government of the United States to lift the ban on the sale of weapons to Latin America. Of course, we are also aware of sales agreed upon with other manufacturing countries. Nonetheless, in the unipolar world in which we are living, a decision of the United Nations has a meaning that transcends the merely commercial. Latin America is enjoying a special historical moment of peace and stability and we firmly hope that we will not be affected by this fact.

The President of Uruguay, Mr. Julio María Sanguinetti, reminded us recently that weapons have their own momentum. He also expressed his deep trust, however, that the measure adopted will only serve to ensure that the resale of arms merely make the necessary minimum upgrade of equipment to guarantee the maintenance of equilibrium in the region.

John Kenneth Galbraith also wrote in the United Nations publication *Disarmament: A Periodic Review*:

> "With weapons coming from prosperous countries, millions of people from the poor countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America have been openly massacred or have died as a result of economic devastation, which is the terribly painful counterpart to civilian disputes and conflicts." ["The Autonomous Military Power: An Economic View". *Disarmament: A Periodic Review*, v.19:3, 1996, pp. 42-43]

We have also noted with concern the global commercial expansion of the transport of dangerous materials and how this can affect the quality of life of the inhabitants of a given country. In this regard, the Senate of Uruguay recently adopted legislation banning the passage of any kind of dangerous waste, in any form or under any regime, through areas under our national jurisdiction. This will serve to avoid any future accident involving such material.

As we prepare to enter the twenty-first century, leaving the cold war behind, important progress has been achieved in reducing tensions, but we must not be satisfied merely with that. We have a duty to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

The United Nations, which is in the throes of reform, is facing a challenge in the area of disarmament and international security that it must meet. Once intra-State conflicts have been settled, the Organization must collect the weapons of the warring parties. In order to keep control over the weapons, we will have to guarantee that they are destroyed and prevent them from falling into other hands.

The persistent and worsening problem of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons used in a wide range of activities, from inter-State aggression to criminal acts, must be dealt with decisively. This proliferation is related to, *inter alia*, drug trafficking, internal disturbances, organized crime and mercenary groups, for which the transborder, clandestine trade in arms is a dangerous ally that we must combat in all its forms. This is where the United Nations is facing one of its greatest challenges.

Organized transnational crime is yet another component of this deadly threat still hanging heavily over humankind, which jeopardizes the peaceful coexistence of the inhabitants of this planet. The task facing the Organization is not easy, but it is not impossible. The fact that we are a troop-contributing country in United Nations peacekeeping operations means that we are a constant collaborator in these efforts, which are becoming increasingly demanding.

We have committed ourselves to all the initiatives to bring about general and complete disarmament, such as "micro-disarmament", which includes the culmination of the Ottawa process leading to the Convention for the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on their Destruction. We will also support the initiative to convene a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, so that, with a precise agenda covering unavoidable issues, we may face the future of international disarmament with determination.

My delegation will join in the efforts to simplify and rationalize the procedures of the First Committee and the Disarmament Commission. Their agendas must be reformed so that our work reaches a level of efficiency equal to the challenges before us.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): I wish to express, Sir, my warm congratulations on your assumption of the leadership of this important Committee. We welcome your comprehensive statement at the start of our debate. My felicitations also go to the other members of the Bureau.

At the outset, let me underline that the vocation of the First Committee consists of disarmament and international security. Evidently, the focus is on the military threats to peace and security. Today's world inherits the realities of the cold war. As the Secretary-General noted in his report on reform of the Organization [A/51/950], the cessation of super-Power rivalry and military confrontation set in train a whole host of progressive changes within and among nations. The collapse of bipolarity has also resulted in uncertainties, strategic gaps and a new polarization, which have created a new arms race.

The military threats to security, both within and among nations, cannot be under-estimated, although some progress has been made in recent years in the field of arms control and disarmament. Progress in the field of weapons of mass destruction has been significant. The ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention was a historic achievement for the international community. We have celebrated the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and witnessed its signature by 147 countries. Confidence-building measures in different regions of the world attest to the optimistic view that reason can prevail over confrontation; that given the political will, regional disarmament can begin without waiting for global disarmament; that the vision of a brave new world can be translated into reality if the peoples of the United Nations work with unity of purpose.

But, unfortunately, the international community is yet to achieve results that would allow complacency, for the accomplishments we have listed are all critically imperfect in each of the domains -- atomic, biological, chemical and conventional.

The cap on nuclear proliferation remains uncertain on several counts. There are suggestions that the number of threshold States could rise. While only five countries remain outside the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the entry into force of the CTBT has been seriously undermined. The controversy over vertical proliferation has also been accentuated by sub-critical tests. Great optimism has been attached to the nuclear-weapon-free zones. But experience has shown that there is a limit to that exercise. The Treaty of Bangkok, without the endorsement of the nuclear five, bears witness to that. The negative security assurances are perceived as seriously flawed. A nuclear-free southern hemisphere is blocked, as the north maintains the nuclear arsenal. In some regions, denuclearization or nuclear-free-zone efforts, it is argued, impinge on global disarmament.

Nuclear arms control has proved elusive. A fissile material cut-off treaty seems as intractable as the CTBT appeared in the last decades. The Conference on Disarmament has been able to make little substantive progress in this field, as in other areas covered by its "Decalogue" over the past year. It has not even been able to set up an ad hoc committee to negotiate a fissile material ban or to agree on the very scope of negotiations. Arguments go back and forth on the elimination of nuclear weapons, from the NPT through the CTBT and the fissile materials cut-off treaty. It is evident that there is no credible way out of the impasse except global nuclear disarmament.

At the last session, the Bangladesh delegation joined others in recalling the historic Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the *Legality of the Threat of Use of Nuclear Weapons*.

Let me recall that the Court decided unanimously that any threat or use of force involving nuclear weapons was unlawful if it violated Article 2, paragraph 4, of the United Nations Charter, which calls on nations to refrain from the threat or use of force, and if it failed to meet "all the requirements" of Article 51 on the right of self-defence. The use of nuclear weapons, the Court said, would generally be contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict, and, in particular, the principles and rules of humanitarian law. Let us also draw attention to the oft-quoted unanimous verdict of the Court that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects, under strict and effective international control.

Let there be no misunderstanding that when we refer to the conclusions of the Canberra Commission that nuclear weapons diminish the security of all States, and hence quote the Court's Advisory Opinion, we are not attempting to turn the opinion of the Court into a legal edict. In doing so,

we are simply reminding NPT signatories of their obligations with regard to nuclear disarmament. In repeating it, we are urging all concerned to take cognizance of the experts' views and of the threats to mankind's very existence. We are encouraged by the European Parliament's resolution of 13 March 1997 calling on members to support the commencement of negotiations in 1997 leading to the conclusion of a convention for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

The group of 21 non-aligned members of the Conference on Disarmament has submitted a programme of action for phased elimination of nuclear weapons by the end of 2020. That proposal is not only realistic but expedient. On this point the ICJ, the Canberra Commission and the European Parliament, as well as various think-tanks and professionals, converge. Differences about the appropriate forum exist. That does not justify inaction. Let this Committee embark on resolving the question of the forum; let it hear the divergent views; let us work together for consensus. It will be a historical aberration if we do not act on such a grave matter in time. The question may be raised: what then prevents the politicians and the diplomats from undertaking negotiations? Whither the vision of the brave new world!

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) has, happily, entered into force. But adherence to it has yet to become universal; a lack of financial resources for destruction of stockpiles is preventing ratification by the country with the largest amount of chemical weapons.

There has been encouraging progress in strengthening the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). The Review Conference had called on the Ad Hoc Group to intensify its work with a view to completing it as soon as possible before the commencement of the fifth review conference in 2001. We hope the Ad Hoc Group will be able to finalize the verification protocol in time.

In the field of conventional arms, attention has remained focused on transparency in armaments. Reporting to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms remains limited, with about half the United Nations membership, including some of the major importers, not providing any data. There are deficiencies in reporting and accounting procedures. Questions and differences remain on the expansion of the Register's scope to cover other conventional weapons, to make the designation of weapons more specific, to encompass domestic procurement and to define transfer. Nevertheless, we commend the work of the Group of Governmental Experts.

The open sale of small arms is of mounting concern to my delegation. As the Secretary-General has reported, in at least 15 conflicts the primary instruments of violence are small arms. The irony is that there is intense competition to export these weapons, including to the conflict areas in which the United Nations is struggling to promote peace. The work of the Group of Governmental Experts, in this perspective, is of particular importance. Our task will be to consider their recommendations and provide for the necessary mechanisms to prevent proliferation of these weapons.

The question of anti-personnel landmines has undoubtedly been on top of the list of disarmament issues over the last year. The fact that about a hundred States have approved an international treaty to ban anti-personnel landmines, for signature in Ottawa in December 1997, and the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and its Coordinator, Ms. Jody Williams, shows that world opinion favours elimination of landmines from the face of the Earth. We welcome this positive development. However, the decision by some major Powers not to sign the agreement renders it virtually ineffective. We support a comprehensive global treaty that will encourage States to give up the option of anti-personnel mines as a means of defence. Although it is lagging behind the Ottawa process, the Conference on Disarmament has appointed a Special Coordinator to conduct consultations on a possible mandate on the question of anti-personnel landmines, under its agenda item on a comprehensive programme of disarmament. We hope that, while working on the issue of landmines, the Conference on Disarmament will pay due regard to the need of affected States, most of which are developing countries, for technological and financial help in the massive and challenging task of mine clearance.

It is satisfying to note that, after intensive negotiations, the Disarmament Commission has generally agreed on convening a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to Disarmament, subject to the emergence of a consensus on its objectives and agenda. Since the third special session on disarmament nine years ago there have been fundamental changes in the international security situation. The fourth special session should keep nuclear disarmament as a priority item on its agenda. In this age of transparency and democracy, it is time that world leaders met in a special session in the spirit of multilateralism, took stock of the changes that have taken place over the years and found a bold and concrete path towards disarmament. We hope that the Disarmament

Commission will be able to finalize the time, objectives and agenda of the fourth special session at its 1998 session.

We appreciate the activities of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific in promoting dialogue on disarmament at a regional and subregional level; this has come to be known as the "Kathmandu process". We hope the Centre will continue to receive the consideration of those whose gracious contributions have helped it to continue.

We see disarmament as an instrument for enhancing international security. The reduction of military threats to security is a must for addressing non-military threats to security, because that is essential for reallocating resources from armaments to development. Disarmament should also be pursued with a special focus on restraint of supplies, and should aim at reducing the underlying political causes of proliferation. All of us share the burden, but some of us certainly have greater powers and responsibilities.

Before concluding, I should like to say that disarmament should not be seen as an end in itself. The noble motivation of disarmament — to save humanity from the scourge of war — should also inspire us to elevate the majority of human beings from the depths of poverty and underdevelopment. The cold war has ended, but the peace dividend has yet to reach developing countries. The savings resulting from a small cut in military expenditure by the major Powers might contribute substantially to financing development in the developing world. Disarmament is an attribute of a higher level of civilization, which can be sustained only through ensuring at least a minimum level of development for all. If humankind wants to attain a true level of civilization, it is not enough to refrain from hurting one another; we have to make every endeavour to help others live a life of human dignity.

Mr. Goosen (South Africa): Please accept my delegation's congratulations, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee during the fifty-second session. I wish to assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation as you and your colleagues lead the work of the Committee to a successful conclusion.

At last year's session of the First Committee, my Ambassador concluded his statement in the general debate by saying that 1996 had been a successful year for disarmament and non-proliferation on many fronts, and he cited the achievements of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the successful Conference on the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, the progress that had been made in increasing the areas of the globe covered by nuclear-weapon-free zones, the work that was being done to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention and the imminent entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention as examples of the work which had been accomplished. He went on to say, however, that there was much that still needed to be done to achieve our common goals of the elimination of all types of weapons of mass destruction and to end the human tragedy and suffering that is being caused by the proliferation of conventional weapons, and that our work here at the First Committee must therefore be focused on ensuring that we maintain the momentum of our accomplishments.

Looking over the events of the past year, South Africa is not in a position to give such a glowing account. The attitude which we are able to take can at best be described as ambivalent. While 1997 has shown us several accomplishments in the field of non-proliferation and disarmament, there were as many disappointments and failures to grasp the opportunities which were available.

The inability of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva to agree on the work which should be done during its 1997 session, despite some last-minute papering over the cracks, was symptomatic of the problems which have been faced. Since the end of the cold war, the Conference on Disarmament has shown itself capable of directing its energies to the negotiation and conclusion of major disarmament and non-proliferation agreements which benefit the peace and security of the entire international community. The Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty were major accomplishments, and as a relatively new member of the Conference on Disarmament South Africa had hoped and expected that that body, as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community, would go on to do more of the same.

The deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament can be ascribed to several factors. The most important of these, in our view, was the inability of many of its members to look beyond the issues which divided them. Instead of showing flexibility and seeking to find compromises, members adopted intractable positions, insisting on the inclusion of specific national and group positions before any programme of work could be agreed upon. At the heart of the problems faced by the Conference on Disarmament was the question of how to address nuclear disarmament and the negotiation of a treaty on the prohibition of the production

of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other explosive devices.

To a lesser extent the anti-personnel landmine issue was also a source of much of the debate in the Conference on Disarmament this year. The conclusion in Oslo of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction should, however, have the result of defusing the debate in the Conference on Disarmament and making it possible to consider a more realistic agenda there for this issue.

The inability of the Conference on Disarmament to reach a consensus on a mechanism which would allow for substantive work on the nuclear disarmament issue can be seen as a result of two opposing views. On the one side, there is a refusal to acknowledge the multilateral dimension of nuclear disarmament, and we have heard concerns expressed about this being the start of a slippery slope and that it would deny the bilateral and plurilateral dimensions of nuclear disarmament. On the other side of the debate, there are those who would seek to impose ideological concepts on and linkages between the various elements of nuclear disarmament. The 1997 impasse should make it clear that the solution for the Conference on Disarmament does not lie down either of these routes. As South Africa's Foreign Minister stated during the general debate at this year's session of the General Assembly,

> "the re-emergence of maximalist positions in the disarmament debate retards global disarmament" [*Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Plenary Meetings*, 6th meeting, p. 15].

The time has come for the States trapped between these two extremes to mobilize their strength and to set an agenda for 1998 which would exert the required pressure for the Conference on Disarmament not only to consider nuclear disarmament as a whole but also, as has previously been agreed, finally to commence the negotiations on the cut-off treaty on the basis of the Shannon report and the mandate contained therein.

Nuclear disarmament is a concern of the entire international community. Substantive work in an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament of the Conference on Disarmament would not, and should not, undermine or threaten the nuclear disarmament negotiations between Russia and the United States. These would continue to be of paramount importance to the reduction of nuclear weapons and for their eventual elimination, and so also will be the future negotiations involving the other nuclear-weapon States. In such an ad hoc committee the international community, as represented by the Conference on Disarmament, should focus its attention on deliberating on the practical steps for systematic and progressive efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons as well as to identify if and when one or more such steps should be the subject of negotiations in the Conference.

A step which has already been considered and identified is the cut-off treaty. The Ad Hoc Committee to negotiate this treaty should also be re-established without further delay. In South Africa's view, it is one of the essential foundation stones for the achievement of our common goal of the elimination of nuclear weapons. It will only be by controlling fissile material that we can end the production and proliferation of further nuclear weapons, thereby creating the conditions for the elimination of all such weapons.

Breaking the deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament is of paramount importance not only to the international community, but also to the Conference itself. As the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community, the Conference on Disarmament will not be able to justify another wasted year. During the 1997 session, questions were already being asked about the Conference's continued functionality, and arguments have been raised as to whether other avenues of possible progress should not be sought.

While South Africa has generally been disappointed by the deadlock in disarmament during 1997, there have been a number of areas of progress. We have been encouraged by the large number of States which have committed themselves to the complete eradication of weapons of mass destruction by acceding to various non-proliferation and disarmament treaties during the past year. Universal adherence to these treaties will pave the way towards a world free of weapons of mass destruction.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization Preparatory Commission and its Provisional Technical Secretariat have been established and have made significant progress in this first year. We would again lend our voice to the call on all States to sign the CTBT and to work together for its early entry into force. States should also ensure that they meet their undertakings under the Treaty, both in its letter and in its spirit.

The entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention this year was a major accomplishment. We are pleased that it has been possible to establish the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons quickly and that it has started to function. This is a tribute to the work done by the Treaty's Preparatory Commission and its Provisional Technical Secretariat. The universalization of the Chemical Weapons Convention remains an important goal for South Africa, and in this context we renew our call on the Russian Federation, as a major declared possessor of chemical weapons, to ratify the Treaty.

The intensification of the work in the Ad Hoc Group of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) is also to be welcomed. It remains our conviction that the early conclusion of the Ad Hoc Group's work is dependent on the continued commitment and substantive participation of all the Treaty's States parties. In the interim, South Africa furthermore continues to encourage all the States parties to the BWC to participate in the Treaty's United Nations-administered confidence-building measures.

The first session of the Preparatory Committee of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in terms of the strengthened review process agreed to at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference was also a success. The States Parties were able to change the nature of the Preparatory Committee from its previous procedural focus to addressing substantive issues. We look forward to the 1998 meeting of the Committee in Geneva, when we hope it will be able to continue with its substantive consideration of NPT-related issues and make time available for the security assurances, implementation of the resolution on the Middle East, and the fissile material cut-off treaty issues that were identified in the formal statement of the Chairman of the first Preparatory Committee.

Initiatives to increase the area of the world covered by nuclear-weapon-free zones have been bolstered by the decision of the Central Asian States to commence work on establishing such a zone in their region. These States are to be congratulated on the recent Tashkent Conference, and South Africa will continue to work with them in the accomplishment of their goal. We will also continue to give our support to the initiative to promote the southern hemisphere as a zone free from nuclear weapons.

In May this year the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) approved a model additional protocol in order to strengthen the effectiveness and improve the efficiency of the Agency's safeguards system. This is in line with paragraph 11 of the Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, which calls for a strengthening of the IAEA's safeguards system in order to increase its ability to detect undeclared nuclear activities. The Agency is to be commended for responding to the challenges posed to the safeguards system by adopting the additional protocol. These strengthened measures underline the determination of the international community to further enhance nuclear non-proliferation, and underscore the IAEA's importance as a vital component of global nuclear non-proliferation. It is, however, essential that, in order for the strengthened safeguards to have the desired effect, the nuclear-weapon States apply the provisions of the additional protocol, since, without their participation, the strengthened safeguards system will be significantly flawed. Similarly, South Africa calls for the universal application of the protocol in all States.

Humanity is faced with the daily threat of harm from the use of conventional weapons. These weapons are the source of most of the death and suffering caused in conflicts around the world today, and it is thus our hope that a greater emphasis will be placed on conventional armaments in all disarmament forums. The rebuilding and prosperity of society that should be gained from various peace and democratization initiatives is curtailed by the proliferation of especially small arms and light weapons. A high priority should therefore be placed on strategies and policies intended to prevent the proliferation of conventional weapons and to reduce their flow to conflict areas.

South Africa welcomes the Report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, which lays the foundation for future action by the international community to prevent and reduce the proliferation and use of small arms and light weapons.

South Africa also continues to encourage all Member States of the United Nations to support and regularly participate in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. The Register remains a very important tool in building transparency and confidence, and we take note of the expert Group's report and their evaluation of the Register. South Africa is disappointed that no agreement could be reached on adjustments and technical aspects of the categories of weapons covered by the Register. Such adjustments could have resulted in broadening the present categories of weapons, thereby ensuring that the Register is more relevant for those countries that transfer weapons

falling just below the current definition of the seven categories of the Register.

On 18 September 1997 the Oslo Diplomatic Conference adopted the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. The Convention represents a clear and total ban on anti-personnel mines and establishes a compelling new international norm against this scourge, which has so long been wrought on humanity, especially innocent civilians — mostly women and children. South Africa looks forward to the early entry into force of the Convention and appeals to all States to heed the call of the international community against these inhumane weapons. We will be joining those who are committed to the treaty by submitting to the General Assembly at this session a draft resolution inviting all States to sign and become parties to the Convention. At this point it is a pleasure for me and my Government to extend our congratulations to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and to Jody Williams, the Campaign's Coordinator, on having been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. The achievement of the Convention in Oslo and the decision to award the Nobel Peace Prize to the Campaign and Ms. Williams clearly demonstrate the will of the international community on this crucial issue.

South Africa has welcomed and given its support to the Secretary-General's proposals for the reform of the United Nations disarmament machinery, including his proposal to reconstitute the Centre for Disarmament Affairs into the Department for Disarmament and Arms Regulation. Of particular importance to us is the additional focus that he has placed on conventional weapons. We would, however, note that another part of the disarmament machinery that is in need of reform is the Conference on Disarmament itself. The Conference on Disarmament, which is funded by the United Nations membership as a whole, should be democratized so as to allow any member of the United Nations to become a member of the Conference itself. The weakness of argument that the Conference on Disarmament can only effectively function with a limited membership is demonstrated by the negotiations that have taken place under the umbrella of existing treaties and also by the Oslo Diplomatic Conference. The national security concerns and other concerns that States may have are protected by the Conference's rules of procedure and not by limited membership.

South Africa hopes that 1998 will be the year in which we will be able to resolve the stalemate that has overshadowed all our work this year. We remain committed to working in the First Committee and all other disarmament and non-proliferation forums so as to achieve our common goal of eliminating all weapons of mass destruction and limiting the numbers of conventional weapons to those required for self-defence.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.

United Nations A/C.1/52/PV.6

General Assembly
Fifty-second session

Official Records

First Committee

6th Meeting
Thursday, 16 October 1997, 3 p.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Nkgowe . . . . . (Botswana)

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Agenda items 62 to 82 (*continued*)

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Mr. Ulland (Norway): My delegation congratulates you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee. I can assure you of our support and cooperation.

A most important step during the past year has been the conclusion of a new convention banning a weapon which, even after the end of hostilities, has killed or maimed so many people during this century. The ban on anti-personnel mines is an important achievement both as a humanitarian and disarmament effort. Like many other States, Norway has long been gravely concerned by the suffering and casualties caused by these mines. They obstruct economic development and reconstruction, inhibit the repatriation of refugees and internally displaced persons, and have other severe consequences for years after emplacement.

This concern was also reflected in resolution 51/45 S, adopted by the General Assembly at its last session, which urges Governments to "pursue vigorously" [para. 1] an international agreement to ban anti-personnel mines. One hundred and fifty-six countries committed themselves to that goal by supporting the resolution. It is remarkable that we have managed to meet the objectives set out in a United Nations resolution so quickly. The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, successfully negotiated in Oslo in September, will serve as a practical tool in our efforts to end human suffering, and is a demonstration of what can be achieved through close cooperation between non-governmental organizations and Governments. We are most encouraged by the tremendous popular support for a total ban on anti-personnel mines. The momentum behind the Ottawa process has in itself been a universalizing factor. We are very pleased that this year's Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and the campaign's coordinator, Jody Williams. The award is well deserved, and will provide an important impetus for the further efforts to gain universal support for the Convention.

The Convention sets out an unequivocal ban on the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of anti-personnel mines, without exemptions, rights of reservation or transitional periods. Such an unequivocal commitment has been a priority for Norway since the beginning of the Ottawa process. Another important part of the Convention is the obligation to destroy or ensure the destruction of all stockpiled and emplaced anti-personnel mines within a certain time limit. The Convention also recognizes the enormous challenge faced by mine-affected countries in meeting the commitments under the Convention by providing a political framework for international assistance and technical cooperation in the field of mine clearance, stockpile destruction, and the mapping and marking of mine areas until they are cleared. The need for special attention to the victims of anti-personnel mines, from rehabilitation to effective long-term social and economic reintegration, has been recognized explicitly in the Convention. The needs

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are enormous, and only a concerted approach can help those whose lives have been so tragically affected by the use of anti-personnel mines. The Norwegian Government is, subject to parliamentary approval, prepared to allocate $100 million over the next five years to mine clearance and to mine victim assistance.

The challenge facing us now is to make the Convention universal and to implement its humanitarian goals. This will be the second phase of the Ottawa process. We urge all States to sign and ratify the Convention as soon as possible. We also hope that States not yet in a position to do so at this stage will, as interim steps, take measures aimed at prohibiting, restricting or suspending the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines.

Together with the largest possible number of other States, we will this year sponsor a draft resolution inviting all States to sign and ratify the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. The operative paragraphs of the draft resolution focus on the signature and implementation of the Convention. We hope the draft resolution will attract the widest possible support among United Nations Member States.

The agreement between the United States of America and the Russian Federation during the Helsinki summit in March to embark on negotiations on reduced strategic arsenals beyond the parameters of START II is a welcome step in the right direction. This shows that the nuclear-weapon States are taking seriously their specific responsibility for nuclear disarmament as set out in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

We continue to stress the need for further reductions in tactical nuclear weapons, and for their destruction. We know that thousands of nuclear weapons have been withdrawn and put into storage. These weapons should be destroyed, not merely stored. It is important to ensure that this part of the disarmament process is also continued, as proposed in earlier unilateral declarations made by the United States of America and by the Russian Federation.

Several ideas have been put forward as to how we could best proceed on a broad scale in our efforts to address nuclear issues. We have noted with interest the report by the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, and consider its proposals and recommendations to be valuable in charting the course ahead. The Norwegian approach to the wider problems related to nuclear activities is based on the realization that there are potential risks of proliferation inherent in both military and civilian nuclear activities. In addition, we see challenges from the process of nuclear disarmament itself. The international disarmament agenda should, in our view, encompass a program for managing disarmament, including the secure and environmentally safe handling of material from weapons scheduled for destruction. As a response to the serious challenges posed by these activities, the Norwegian Government has drawn up a plan of action on nuclear activities and chemical weapons in areas adjacent to our northern borders. One priority area of this plan is the management, storage and disposal of spent nuclear fuel and radioactive waste. Our goal is, in cooperation with other interested States, to achieve safe, cost-effective operations under independent control and inspection, and in keeping with internationally accepted principles and guidelines.

The signing and adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) last year was a milestone in the annals of global disarmament. For the first time we now have a Treaty banning all kinds of nuclear test explosions. This Treaty will facilitate the further implementation of the principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament adopted at the Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The conclusion of the CTBT, however, is not the end of the road. Nuclear proliferation will continue to be an important topic on the global multilateral disarmament agenda.

Negotiations on an agreement prohibiting the production of fissile material for weapons purposes should be the next priority item on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament. After the conclusion of the CTBT, cut-off negotiations would be in accordance with the principles and objectives agreed at the NPT Review Conference in 1995. A cut-off agreement is an important means of reducing the availability of fissile material. We should work towards greater openness regarding the stocks of fissile material held by nuclear Powers. As a first step, the nuclear Powers could, on a voluntary basis, provide detailed information on their stocks of plutonium and highly enriched uranium. A second step could be to ensure cooperative measures to clarify and confirm those declarations. As a third step, the nuclear Powers could permit international inspections of their stocks, with the aim of ensuring that the inventory in storage can be taken out only for non-weapons purposes. As a fourth step, agreed monitored net reductions from these stockpiles could be introduced. In addition, consistent and stringent international standards of accounting and

security for fissile materials should be established. A programme along these lines was presented by Norway at the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 NPT Review Conference, and it is now part of the agenda for that Conference.

The efforts of the international community to rid the world of chemical weapons go back many years. Translating this long-standing commitment into a workable Treaty has taken generations, but the task was finally accomplished on 29 April this year, when the global ban on chemical weapons entered into force. By establishing an internationally agreed norm on chemical weapons and giving the international community the means to enforce it, the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) represents a major step in the collective endeavour to eradicate weapons of mass destruction. We urge all States which have not yet done so, in particular those States in possession of chemical weapons, to sign the Convention and speed up their ratification process.

The process towards establishing a verification regime for the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction is slowly moving in the right direction. The work in the Ad Hoc Group has become more comprehensive and focused, with the consolidation of a basis for the negotiations. If we spend 11 weeks of negotiations in the Ad Hoc Group next year in an efficient way, it should be possible to present a proposal for a verification protocol by the end of 1998. We accept that verification of the Biological Weapons Convention is more difficult than for other weapons of mass destruction, due to the very nature of biological weapons. However, we believe that sensible measures to secure compliance and to prevent non-compliance with the Convention can be established with the necessary goodwill and a pragmatic approach by all parties.

Our security agenda is more complex than ever before. Future security depends on a mixture of regional and global initiatives and measures, and the Conference on Disarmament bears the main responsibility for the global part of this equation. We are all interested in seeing this forum serve as an effective instrument in the field of global disarmament. However, 1997 has not been one of the Conference on Disarmament's most productive years. There are certainly a number of political reasons for this impasse. At the same time, we strongly feel that there is a fundamental need to reform the Conference on Disarmament as an institution. Most important, it can no longer be justified that countries are excluded from its membership. This could have an adverse effect on the Conference on Disarmament's relevance and credibility, and, ultimately, possibly even on its survivability.

Mr. N'Dry (Côte d'Ivoire) (*interpretation from French*): At the outset I should like, on behalf of the delegation of Côte d'Ivoire, to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. We also extend our congratulations to the other members of the Bureau, and to your predecessor, Ambassador Alyaksandr Sychou, Permanent Representative of Belarus.

Since the end of the cold war significant positive changes have taken place in international relations. The most important progress has, without doubt, taken place in the field of disarmament. We have witnessed, *inter alia*, the indefinite extension in 1995 of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the signing in 1996 of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and the entry into force on 29 April 1997 of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Bodies have been created in order to ensure better implementation of the main provisions of these international instruments. In this context, my delegation is pleased that work has started in the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, whose headquarters are in The Hague, and in the Provisional Technical Secretariat of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, based in Vienna.

Furthermore, the successive creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones — in Latin America and the Caribbean, through the Treaty of Tlatelolco; in the South Pacific, through the Treaty of Rarotonga; and in Africa, through the Treaty of Pelindaba — are encouraging signs that we are moving towards a completely denuclearized world, for which we all fervently hope.

It is reassuring to note that the United Nations is at the heart of all these developments. Multilateralism is increasingly the order of the day in the field of disarmament and agreements on the reduction or elimination of weapons are no longer the preserve of the great military powers as in the past.

In this regard, my delegation would like to express its satisfaction at the Secretary-General's decision to set up, within the framework of the reform of the United Nations, a Department for Disarmament and Arms Regulation headed by an Under-Secretary-General. As we see it, this

decision is fully justified in view of the new tasks that the United Nations has to deal with in the area of disarmament.

While there is reason to be pleased at the progress I have just outlined, we must, however, recognize that much remains to be done to establish greater collective security. In this respect, my delegation is pleased to note that the international community is increasingly concerned at the danger posed by landmines.

According to documents of the United Nations and certain non-governmental organizations, the anti-personnel landmines scattered over more than 70 countries kill or mutilate some 26,000 persons a year, 500 each week, or one person every 20 minutes. It is estimated that 30 million landmines are buried under African soil, which is 27 per cent of the 110 million mines planted around the world.

The presence of these devices makes it impossible to return to normal life, even long after a conflict has ended, and slows down the economic recovery of the infested territories. A political leader from a Western country quite rightly said recently that the dissemination of mines throughout the world was a war without end. Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the adoption in Oslo last September of an international Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on their Destruction.

In thanking the initiators of this project for this noble enterprise, my delegation is pleased to announce that it will be joining the countries that intend to sign this Convention in December in Ottawa. My country hopes that the States that have not endorsed the Oslo decision will be able to do so in the very near future.

The awarding of this year's Nobel Prize for Peace to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines will undoubtedly contribute to a greater awareness on the part of the international community of the need to eliminate the danger caused by this type of weapon once and for all.

Africa south of the Sahara as a whole, and the West African subregion in particular, is experiencing a phenomenon of insecurity characterized by the dissemination of illegal small arms that, in both urban centres and rural areas, promote large-scale banditry, the formation of armed groups and a trend toward widespread self-defence on the part of populations whose security is threatened.

This phenomenon is threatening the fledgling democracies in the subregion and is also a source of instability in other, different regions of the world.

It is gratifying to note that the international community is now concerned at this scourge. In this respect, we welcome the recently developed cooperation between the United Nations and the Republic of Mali and also with some other States of the West African subregion, including my own, with a view to determining the magnitude of the phenomenon of the illicit circulation of small arms and how to end it.

My delegation also commends the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms for the excellent report [A/52/298] it has produced and which has been submitted to us by the Secretary-General.

Côte d'Ivoire, as one of the sponsors of resolution 50/70 B which requested the Secretary-General to draw up this report, endorses and supports the report's recommendations and, in particular, paragraph 80 (k), in which the Panel of Governmental Experts suggests that the United Nations should consider the possibility of convening a international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects in order to pursue the issues highlighted in that document.

In the same context, my delegation would like to reiterate the appeal it made during the general debate at this session of the General Assembly to the United Nations to organize a regional conference, in cooperation with the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), to look into the illicit circulation of small arms in the West African subregion, in accordance with resolution 51/45 L.

It is now acknowledged that the best way of ensuring peace is still conflict prevention through a concerted international security policy. My country intends to become further involved in this approach and this is why the Head of State of Côte d'Ivoire, President Henri Konan Bédié, recently stipulated that Côte d'Ivoire's armed forces can henceforth participate in peacekeeping operations, *inter alia*, in the framework of an African interposition force, for which there is now an undeniable need.

West Africa, thanks to the experience gained in the settlement of the Liberian conflict, could easily, in the view of my delegation, form a subregional peace force which would bring together elements of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and those of the Agreement on Non-

Aggression and Assistance in Matters of Defence (ANAD), which includes Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Benin, Niger, Mali, Mauritania and Togo. This subregional peace force would be organized in pre-established tactical or logistical modules in a state of operational readiness on their respective territories and able to act at short notice at the request of ECOWAS, the OAU or the United Nations.

The end of ideological confrontation between the two blocs and the progress achieved with various initiatives in recent years in the field of disarmament have legitimately raised the hope that the resources previously devoted to military purposes would be redirected towards socio-economic development and environmental protection.

This view of the matter, unfortunately, has not yet been universally accepted. However, Côte d'Ivoire hopes that, sooner or later, the world will move in this direction and we are convinced that the United Nations can contribute greatly to this process.

Mr. Pham Quang Vinh (Viet Nam): May I first extend to you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau the warmest congratulations of the delegation of Viet Nam. We are confident that under your able guidance, this Committee will discharge effectively the heavy workload entrusted to it. In this connection, I would like to assure you of my delegation's full cooperation in bringing the work of the Committee to a successful conclusion.

The end of the cold war, with the danger of a new nuclear holocaust driven further away, has opened up new opportunities for cooperation, including that in the field of disarmament. We welcome the progress recently achieved in this field, notably the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT); subsequently, the entry into force this year of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) banning a whole category of weapons of mass destruction; and also the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which adopted by consensus the important decisions on "Principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament" and on "Strengthening the review process for the Treaty".

Also to be highlighted among the progress made is the emergence and consolidation of nuclear-weapon-free zones, such as those established by the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Pelindaba and Bangkok. We share the belief that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among States of the region contributes positively to the enhancement of international peace and security. In this regard, the efforts of the non-nuclear-weapon States need to be supported by the international community, in particular the nuclear-weapon States.

We support the approach of building a southern hemisphere free from nuclear weapons, starting from the basis of the achievements of the establishment of the existing zones.

In our region the South-east Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, the Bangkok Treaty, has entered into force. This is an important step. We express our hope that the nuclear-weapon States will soon extend their recognition to the Treaty and sign its Protocol in order to strengthen the power of the Treaty, thus contributing to the enhancement of peace and security in the region and in the world.

While welcoming the progress made, we recognize also that much remains yet to be done. The end of the cold war has made it even more clearly unjustifiable to maintain arsenals of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, let alone to maintain them to such a large extent as is currently the case. Rather, it has underlined the greater need to do away with those types of horrible weapons altogether as well as the possibility of doing so. We believe that the concept of deterrence based on nuclear superiority must be made irrelevant for all time as it already evidently is in today's world.

It is the consistent position of Viet Nam to stand firmly for the total elimination of nuclear weapons — the sooner the better. We shall therefore continue to support all efforts leading towards nuclear disarmament and the attainment of a world free from nuclear weapons. Political will and determination must be shown by the nuclear-weapon States, especially to realize the legal commitment made under article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) for nuclear disarmament. In this regard, we fully support the historic opinion of the International Court of Justice that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament.

While the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty is yet to take effect, the cessation of all tests must be maintained, and further measures need to be agreed upon and taken to make the ban on nuclear tests truly comprehensive.

In April this year the Preparatory Committee for the NPT Review Conference in the year 2000 met for the first

time and started the strengthening review process of the Treaty. In this context, we urge that greater, constructive efforts be made in the upcoming Preparatory Committee meetings to ensure the success of the Conference and, more important, to fulfil all obligations under the Treaty as well as the commitments made by consensus and set out in the documents of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. The obligation for nuclear disarmament must be incorporated in this process.

Viet Nam has joined other countries in putting forward the 28-State proposal for a programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons. We further renew our support for the establishment by the Conference on Disarmament of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament.

My delegation supports the important role played by the United Nations and multilateral mechanisms in the common endeavour for international security and disarmament. Their role should be strengthened on the basis of their respective agreed mandates and priorities.

With regard to the reform of the United Nations, my delegation supports the efforts of the Secretary-General and will make our observations and contributions, including those related to disarmament, at the on-going consultation process in the plenary. My delegation shares the belief expressed by the Secretary-General that the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific continues to serve as a useful instrument for fostering a climate of cooperation and disarmament in the region. We therefore commend the efforts made by the Director of the Centre.

The continued impasse at the Conference on Disarmament is of concern, as it risks downgrading the role of the Conference as the sole multilateral negotiating mechanism on disarmament. We therefore call for greater efforts to be made to enable the work of the Conference and the related negotiations to move forward.

Viet Nam shares the grave concern over the consequences of the indiscriminate use of landmines. Having been a victim of landmines, we recognize the gravity of the related problems and deeply understand the tragedy in terms of both human and material losses. We therefore fully support the strict prohibition on the indiscriminate use of landmines and the moratorium on their export. We view mine clearance, assistance in demining and humanitarian assistance as matters of great importance, and call for greater efforts in this regard.

In addressing the issue of landmines, we should at the same time recognize that the central issue is the indiscriminate nature of their use. With regard to the defensive use of these devices for the sole purpose of protecting national sovereignty and territorial integrity, we concur with the views expressed in the ministerial communiqué of the Non-Aligned Movement of 25 September 1997, which underlined that any negotiations or agreements thereon should take into account the legitimate security concerns of States as well as their legitimate rights under the Charter of the United Nations.

The question of international security and disarmament, especially nuclear disarmament, continues to be high on the agenda of the international community and that of the United Nations. The world can feel secure only when lasting peace is established, with that peace being constructed on an equitable basis and security being ensured for all States, especially small and non-nuclear-weapon States. This calls also for freeing our world of all nuclear weapons urgently.

In view of the new circumstances of the world situation, my delegation supports the early convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, in order to build upon the historic achievements recorded at the first special session, as well as other important achievements recorded thereafter.

Mr. Ayadi (Algeria) *(interpretation from French)*: It is with great pleasure and a feeling of great pride, Sir, that I see you preside over this important Committee, whose work I am sure you will conduct to the satisfaction of all. I should like to take this opportunity to express to you and to the other officers of the Committee the warmest congratulations of the delegation of Algeria, which assures you of our complete cooperation for the success of our work.

I should also like to pay a tribute to our colleague, Ambassador Sychou of Belarus, for the remarkable manner in which he conducted the work of the Committee at the last session.

If there has ever been an area of international relations in which historical developments have produced noteworthy progress and opened the door to important initiatives, it is that of disarmament. Each day new proposals are formulated to reduce the existing potential for destruction and thereby to try to remove the spectre of a flare-up for which all humanity would have to pay the price.

In addition to the bilateral measures taken in that framework, particularly this year, with the forthcoming opening of START III negotiations once START II has been ratified, I note with satisfaction the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention in April 1997 and the establishment of its Organization and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization. We also commend the results achieved at the first session of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Preparatory Committee, even though they fall short of our expectations, as well as the holding of the Oslo Diplomatic Conference on the banning of anti-personnel landmines, which brought together more than a hundred countries, my own among them.

It is comforting to note that, notwithstanding the scant progress registered this year in the Conference on Disarmament, multilateral work on disarmament has not only complemented bilateral efforts but has also become essential by lending universality to any initiative and thereby ensuring full respect for agreements and treaties in this sphere and thus their success. We continue to believe that bilateral and multilateral approaches should complement each other and coalesce in a search for effectiveness, since responsibilities, like risks, are shared.

General and complete disarmament is now a universal need, and it should be perceived in its original terms, namely, that there is not nor can there be any alternative to the achievement of true nuclear disarmament, which alone can free mankind from apocalypse, ensure security for all and channel nuclear energy to economic and social development by using it exclusively for peaceful means.

In this connection, and without taking away from steps that have already been or are being taken, we feel that further efforts are needed to promote the emergence of a new approach through the adoption of meaningful measures of nuclear disarmament, which incontrovertibly remains the absolute priority in achieving the goal of general and complete disarmament which the international community set for itself at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

In that framework, the proposal of the Group of 21 to establish a special committee to develop a timetable for the phased reduction of nuclear weapons deserves serious and perhaps more determined consideration that will finally ensure a successful outcome to negotiations on the elimination of nuclear weapons. Now that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has been signed by more than 140 countries, nothing stands in the way of our negotiating together, within the Conference on Disarmament, a timetable, albeit provisional, for a phased and ultimately complete process of nuclear disarmament.

In addition, the halting of the production of fissile materials must be combined with other related measures to enable the disarmament process to have real substance and to proceed effectively towards the elimination of nuclear weapons. One such measure would be the prohibition of the use or threat of use of such weapons in any circumstances against non-nuclear-weapon States. However, such assurances cannot be fully effective if they are not contained in a legal instrument binding on all the nuclear Powers.

The four nuclear-weapon-free zone Treaties — the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Pelindaba and Bangkok — today cover more than a hundred countries. That shows the progress achieved in this sphere. In this connection, my delegation welcomes the efforts being made by Kazakhstan, Kyrgystan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to create a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia.

At the crossroads of Africa and the Middle East, Algeria long ago committed itself to work to make both those regions free of nuclear weapons. Although Africa managed to achieve that goal in April 1996, all the indications are that in the Middle East, unfortunately, notwithstanding the unequivocal commitment of the international community, such a result is still a long way off, owing to the attitude of Israel, the only State in the region that is not a party to the NPT and that continues to possess nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction outside any international control.

In a world endeavouring to effect qualitative changes in international relations, while progress in science and technology is constantly increasing man's control over nature, the atom should be used exclusively for our well-being. No obstacle should stand in the way of the promotion of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes in economic development.

In this connection, strengthening the effectiveness and efficiency of the safeguards system, aside from being a means to create confidence among States, gives an impetus to technology transfers needed for the scientific, economic and social advance of developing countries.

Given its basic choices, Algeria has elected to foster research into the peaceful use of nuclear energy in various social and economic spheres. The quality and level of

relations Algeria has developed in this connection in recent years with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), both in the area of bringing its two experimental and radioisotope-producing nuclear reactors into the safeguards regime and in the area of technological assistance and cooperation, clearly illustrate my country's decisive commitment to the Agency's objectives and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

With regard to disarmament, Algeria, the country in its geographical area that devotes the smallest percentage of its gross national product to national defence, fully endorses the basic right of security for all States, whose promotion necessarily entails, first, nuclear disarmament, followed by the elimination of other weapons of mass destruction and ending with the progressive and balanced reduction of conventional weapons at both the global and regional levels.

In this connection, we feel that the international community should deal with conventional weapons just as it deals with other types of weapons, especially when such weapons, through illicit trafficking, are being supplied to terrorist networks whose goals are to destabilize States, undermine democratic values and terrorize civilian populations.

Given the serious threat that international terrorism poses to the security and stability of many countries, and because of its international ramifications and the complicity it enjoys in waging its campaign of death and destruction, the only effective response to this scourge is the effective and dedicated cooperation of the whole international community in dismantling and neutralizing those networks of logistical support that are supplying terrorist groups in their deadly work, especially with regard to the supply of weapons.

The prevailing notion of international security, viewed as an island of economic prosperity in a sea of economic uncertainty, instability and insecurity, has shown its limitations, as it contains much uncertainty and, above all, involves considerable danger. Without lasting peace and security for the benefit of all, will not such an imbalance between countries on a single planet inevitably subject every region of the world to threats and uncertainties?

Today, it has become imperative to undertake a review of the question of security through a multidimensional approach in which the military aspect is addressed along with other priorities, particularly those of economic and social development. This approach would simultaneously and equally encompass all the new challenges and transnational threats which confront the international community.

It is also natural for Algeria to plead for a global and integrated approach to the security and development of the Mediterranean, convinced as it is that there can be no genuine security for all as long as serious and intolerable imbalances persist between the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean.

The Barcelona Euro-Mediterranean process, initiated two years ago, is aimed precisely at promoting a renewed Mediterranean order that can consolidate stability and prosperity, fostering the democratic processes and economic reforms undertaken by numerous countries of the region, and achieving a partnership based on a balance of interests and a respect for differences. The last meeting of the Mediterranean Forum, held in July 1997 at Algiers, stemmed from the same objective.

Through the proposals on disarmament that have been submitted to the Member States, the Secretary-General has again confirmed the central role that the United Nations will have to play in the universal promotion of peace and security on the basis of full respect for the Charter's purposes and principles. We therefore note with interest the initiative taken by the Secretary-General to reconstitute the Centre for Disarmament as the Department for Disarmament and Arms Regulation. This decision, however, requires clarification as to the Department's functions, particularly with regard to defining priorities. In this connection, document A/C.1/52/CRP.3, which was distributed yesterday, unfortunately responded only partially to this.

For my country, nuclear disarmament is and must remain the absolute priority, as enshrined in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. That instrument will remain relevant and valid until the General Assembly decides otherwise.

My delegation would also like to underline that the transfer of the activities formerly dealt with by the Centre for Disarmament should not affect the activities of the Conference on Disarmament, which in Algeria's opinion continues to be the sole multilateral negotiating forum in the field of disarmament.

The other body which my delegation will continue to support firmly is the Disarmament Commission, a deliberative body of the General Assembly entrusted with

the review of disarmament and arms control issues, which should continue to be the forum for democratic debate and exchange of views, as it has always been, precisely because it is a body open to the participation of all the Member States of the Organization.

The encouraging results achieved by the Commission at its 1997 substantive session have confirmed, among other things, the considerable contribution it can make in advancing the cause of disarmament. Nevertheless, my delegation is prepared to review and consider any proposal aimed at improving its working methods and procedures.

We continue to think that the First Committee should focus its attention on the disarmament and international security issues on its agenda. While progress has been made in the rationalization of its work, we should still make further efforts to improve those results. My delegation is open to any proposal that is introduced to that end. While it is prepared to consider the question of a thematic debate, whose utility has yet to be proven in the light of recent sessions, my delegation nevertheless continues to believe that it would be difficult to accept the idea of adding other matters to the agenda that have no bearing on the subject matter already addressed.

With respect to the selection of topics for committees, as requested in paragraph 42 of the Secretary-General's report (A/51/950), we find this difficult to put into practice since the differences of opinion are so great in the area of disarmament, as is amply borne out by the inability of the Conference on Disarmament to agree on its own agenda.

Mr. Park (Republic of Korea): My delegation would first like to extend its warmest congratulations on your assumption, Sir, of the chairmanship of the First Committee. We have every confidence that under your able leadership this Committee will make great progress on the important issues on its agenda. On a more personal note, I am indeed very happy to see you in the Chair, as the Republic of Korea and Botswana cooperated so closely in the Security Council during your membership.

I also wish to express my appreciation to Ambassador Sychou of the Republic of Belarus, former Chairman of the First Committee, for his outstanding performance during the previous session.

Since the demise of the cold war, we have witnessed a series of monumental achievements in the field of non-proliferation and disarmament, including the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the successful conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and the establishment and consolidation of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various regions of the world. Also encouraging has been the progress towards eliminating complete categories of weapons of mass destruction, through the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the ongoing efforts to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention.

We are pleased to note the successful launch earlier this year of a new, institutionalized review process of the NPT. The first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference has laid a strong foundation for further progress during its second session. My delegation hopes that future preparatory committees can continue their meaningful work and lead to a successful Review Conference in the year 2000. In particular, we hope that agreement can be reached on a realistic, step-by-step approach to implementing Article VI of the NPT.

The successful conclusion of the CTBT last year gave new momentum to the campaign against nuclear proliferation by ending nuclear-test explosions once and for all. In this regard, we welcome the establishment earlier this year of a Provisional Technical Secretariat for the CTBT Organization, as well as the progress made to date in the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty Organization.

However, the objectives of the CTBT cannot be fully realized without the broad participation of all States in the Treaty. As an original signatory to the CTBT, we urge all States which have not yet joined the Treaty — particularly those whose ratification is necessary for the Treaty to come into force — to do so as soon as possible.

Regarding the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards, we welcome the adoption of a Model Protocol for Part II measures of Programme 93+2 this year. The new Protocol is sure to strengthen the non-proliferation regime by improving the Agency's ability to verify the compliance of States parties to the NPT with their non-proliferation commitments. I would also like to take this opportunity to reaffirm Korea's strong support for Programme 93+2. We are working actively towards the implementation of the Programme and urge all other States to do the same.

My delegation is of the view that nuclear-weapon-free zones can be an effective instrument for promoting nuclear non-proliferation, disarmament and confidence-building,

and thus help to enhance peace and security at the regional and global levels. We therefore welcome the recent establishment and consolidation of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various regions. We also hope that current efforts to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones in other regions, including Central Asia, can produce results satisfactory to the parties concerned.

On the Korean peninsula, there has been progress in resolving the North Korean nuclear issue in the context of the 1994 Agreed Framework between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The ground-breaking ceremony for the light-water reactor project in North Korea last August under the auspices of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization signalled that the Agreed Framework has now entered the implementation stage.

Despite this positive development, my delegation wishes to emphasize here once again that the North Korean nuclear issue can ultimately be resolved only when North Korea complies fully with its safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency, as well as with the Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, which the two sides of Korea agreed to implement when they brought it into force in February 1992.

The entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the establishment of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) are critically important milestones in the international community's journey towards phasing out one of the most gruesome categories of weapons of mass destruction. We welcome the OPCW's launch of verification activities in accordance with the Convention's requirements.

The Government of the Republic of Korea ratified the Convention before its entry into force. As such, we have been fully implementing our obligations under the Convention and will continue to do our part for its overall effectiveness. We are deeply concerned, however, that some States which are considered to possess chemical weapons, including North Korea, continue to refuse to join the chemical weapons non-proliferation regime. My delegation is convinced that universal adherence is essential to the Convention's full realization and implementation, and we strongly urge those countries which have not yet acceded to the Convention to do so without further delay. We also call on all States Parties to faithfully fulfil their obligations under the Convention and support the activities of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

Another pressing need is to strengthen the Biological and Toxin Convention (BWC), designed to prohibit the entire awful array of biological weapons. My Government, for its part, has been a strong supporter of the international community's efforts to adopt verification measures to strengthen the Convention. We are pleased to note that the Ad Hoc Group meeting of States Parties to the BWC has made some progress in this regard. We hope that the determined work of the Ad Hoc Group will be able to produce a legally binding instrument to strengthen the Convention as soon as possible.

My Government has welcomed the opportunity to participate in the implementation of the recommendations of the Third Review Conference and has provided the Secretary-General with all relevant information and data. We believe that the exchange of information in conformity with standardized procedures is a valuable confidence-building measure and we therefore call on all States Parties to the Convention to participate in this important exercise.

A further destabilizing threat to international peace and security is the excessive accumulation of conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons, at a level beyond that which is considered legitimate for self-defence purposes. In this regard, my delegation shares the view that the international community should also focus its attention on conventional disarmament and transparency in armaments.

We regard the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms as an effective means to reduce possible mistrust, miscalculation and military tension, and to promote confidence-building among States. However, in order for the Register to be truly effective, universal participation is critical. In this context, my delegation urges those countries which are not yet participants in the Register to join it as soon as possible. We also encourage the opening of regional discussions on the operation and development of the Register as a means of initiating the confidence-building process at the regional level.

With regard to curbing the illicit trafficking of conventional weapons — one of the most immediate problems we must address — my delegation is pleased to note that the guidelines for international arms transfers, which were concluded at the Disarmament Commission last year, will serve as a code of conduct to enhance

transparency in international arms transfers and to eradicate the illicit transfer of arms.

In order for the guidelines to be successful, however, each country needs to enact adequate national legislation or regulations and to adopt relevant administrative procedures so as to firmly account for and control arms and the export and import of arms.

My Government shares the view that the proliferation of anti-personnel landmines and their indiscriminate and irresponsible use have inflicted a vast amount of needless harm and suffering, especially on civilians. Korea has therefore been an active participant in the international community's efforts to minimize and contain the tragic consequences of these weapons. In this context, my Government has decided to extend for an indefinite period its moratorium on the export of anti-personnel landmines and has made a financial contribution to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance.

As we all know, in recent months, there has been a determined effort to establish a total ban on anti-personnel landmines. Any effort to curtail the deployment of landmines, however, should take into account legitimate concerns of national security. For my country in particular, where much of our population lives within shelling range of the most militarized border in the world, a total ban on anti-personnel mines would actually increase, rather than reduce, the possibility of civilian death and injury by diminishing the effectiveness of military deterrence against a recurrence of war.

In this regard, while we support the spirit of the international convention on a total ban on anti-personnel landmines recently adopted in Oslo, we regret that it does not duly take into account the legitimate security concerns of the Republic of Korea.

The Conference on Disarmament, as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, has done much to advance progress in the field of disarmament by fostering agreement on numerous major disarmament treaties. This year, unfortunately, the divergence of views among member States on what priority to place on the issues to be deliberated prevented the Conference on Disarmament from making tangible progress on the key issues.

We hope that member States will be able to show greater flexibility and willingness to compromise so that, next year, the deliberations of the Conference on outstanding issues can produce substantive progress. In particular, we wish to call for the immediate commencement of negotiations on the cut-off treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices, starting at the next session of the Conference on Disarmament.

Global and regional approaches to disarmament complement each other and should therefore be pursued in tandem with efforts to promote peace and security at the regional and international levels. In this regard, my Government supports the promotion of confidence-building measures as a means of easing tensions and furthering disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation at the regional and subregional levels.

In this context, in 1994 my Government proposed the Northeast Asia Security Dialogue as a vehicle for reducing tension and improving the security environment in North-East Asia through confidence-building measures among the six countries concerned, namely, the two Koreas, China, Japan, the Russian Federation and the United States. It is our sincere hope that a favourable response will be forthcoming from the countries concerned.

With regard to regional approaches to disarmament, we recognize that the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific has contributed to strengthening regional disarmament efforts, and hope that it will continue to promote regional security dialogue through its activities.

Since the end of the cold war, disarmament has assumed greater prominence on the agenda of the international community. There are great expectations of the positive role that the United Nations can play in advancing non-proliferation and disarmament, as it has done in recent years. In this regard, my delegation regards the Secretary-General's efforts to strengthen the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament as most timely and appropriate, and supports in principle his proposal to establish a new Department for Disarmament and Arms Regulation. However, we believe that the mandate of a new department should be defined in such a way as to avoid duplication of efforts with other disarmament machinery. Member States as well must shoulder greater responsibility for building a world free of weapons, so that future generations can live their lives completely free from the scourge of war.

In closing, I assure you, Sir, that you may count on the full support of my delegation as you guide this

Committee's consideration of the challenging issues that lie ahead of us.

Mr. Saliba (Malta): May I first of all congratulate you, Sir, on your unanimous election to the Chair of this important Committee. Your experience and skill augur well for a successful outcome of this Committee's work. Our thanks also goes to your predecessor, who with vigour and determination executed the work of this Committee to bring it to a successful conclusion.

Disarmament and international security lie at the heart of this Organization's work. Efforts towards the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction have been the subject of lengthy debate and careful negotiation. Recent years have seen progress in a number of disarmament fields. We have witnessed the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as well as the strengthening of its review process. The NPT remains a cornerstone in the non-proliferation regime. Progress towards the universality of the Treaty continues. Malta urges those States that are not yet parties to the Treaty to accede at the earliest possible date and to conclude safeguards with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

In addition, treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones are on the rise and reinforce the wider non-proliferation efforts on a regional basis. In 1996 two new treaties were signed with a view to establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones in Africa and South-East Asia. We welcome these treaties and support efforts for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

The adoption in 1996 of a Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and more recently the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the establishment of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) demonstrate the commitment of the international community to curb the spread of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. As a member State of the OPCW as well as of the Executive Council, Malta will continue to work assiduously with other member States with a view to strengthening the OPCW and to contributing towards the full implementation of the Convention and its universality.

In May this year agreement was reached on a model protocol for the implementation of measures of the IAEA's Programme 93+2, which will enhance the capability of the IAEA to detect undeclared nuclear activities. The measures and decisions taken by the Agency to maintain and strengthen the effectiveness and cost-efficiency of the safeguards system are indeed welcome by Malta.

All these steps, taken individually or collectively, are landmarks on the long road towards a nuclear-weapon-free world in which nations will harmoniously exist in a stable peace

> "where war is thought to be unlikely not because of mutual fear but because of mutual satisfaction with the prevailing situation". [*Stable Peace*, by Kenneth Boulding]

Last month the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency approved Malta's application for membership of the IAEA. Malta's accession to the Agency is a further demonstration of my Government's commitment to policies that oppose and prohibit the production, use or threat of use of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. We believe that membership of the Agency will enhance Malta's role in and contribution to security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region, particularly in the field of nuclear disarmament.

Nuclear export controls constitute an important feature in the efforts to stem the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We encourage all countries exporting nuclear material to accept the guidelines for nuclear exports, as set out in the IAEA's information circular INFCIRC/254, and to supplement this by establishing effective national mechanisms for export control. Export controls and, in particular, the control of material and equipment that can be used for dual purposes are matters to which the Government of Malta attaches increasing importance. Far from being seen as a restriction on trade, such controls should be viewed as a means to further enhance security measures related to such materials. We believe that an exchange of adequate information is essential for the insight it will provide into areas of potential concern, and that regular consultation will help restrict exports that could contribute to the acquisition of nuclear weapons by non-nuclear-weapon States.

In this respect, allow me to express to the Governments of the United Kingdom and the United States our appreciation for sharing with Maltese officials their respective expertise in this field. After all, the control of the international illicit trade in arms and the prevention of nuclear terrorism are two areas where countries simply cannot operate in isolation.

While the pursuit of nuclear disarmament remains one of the international community's top priorities, the elimination of other weapons of mass destruction, equally devastating in their destructive capabilities, remains high on our agenda. In the same way as we have welcomed the IAEA's strengthened safeguards system, we look forward to the finalization of a verification protocol on the Biological Weapons Convention, and urge the start of negotiations on a cut-off treaty on fissile material. Of equal importance to my delegation is the sense of urgency required in achieving universality of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization has recently concluded its third meeting. Since starting its work in March this year, the Preparatory Commission has initiated activities to establish the global verification regime foreseen in the Treaty so that it will be operational by the time the Treaty enters into force. This should include a worldwide network of monitoring stations, an international data centre and on-site inspections. We are encouraged by the progress achieved so far.

A few small steps can, in most cases, yield the same benefit as one larger step, but only if they are taken in the same direction. My delegation believes that a few small but important steps have been taken in the direction of greater transparency in armaments through the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms; standardized reporting on military expenditure; and objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures. We believe that each of these steps will further enhance confidence and trust between States.

Other practical disarmament measures, such as those envisaged in General Assembly resolution 51/45 N, "Consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures", and its follow-up draft resolution this year, will help to promote a culture of peace both within and beyond national boundaries. Our commitment to further intensification of the efforts to buttress such measures shows our belief in the need for a continued focus on enhancing transparency in armaments. This is one of the items to which Malta attaches great importance.

The attention which we, as States, give to the question of disarmament stems not only from broader concerns about national, regional and international security, but also from a will to end the suffering brought to civilians and innocent people which fall victim to the scourge of such devices as anti-personnel landmines. Malta has been foremost in support for the initiatives taken towards the elimination of the production, stockpiling and use of anti-personnel landmines. The Ottowa process is a commendable initiative in this direction. Malta looks forward to the opening for signature of its Treaty at the end of this year.

Of equal importance is the question of the illicit transfer of conventional weapons and their link to destabilizing forces such as terrorism, drug trafficking and money laundering. The report presented by the Group of Governmental Experts and the recommendations contained therein have our full support. We will be supportive of any effort that continues to seek consensus on this important matter.

Allow me to say a few words about this year's session of the Conference on Disarmament. As the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, the Conference on Disarmament has the central role of furthering discussion on all aspects of disarmament issues that aim towards concrete agreements and treaties among States.

This year's session of the Conference has been a disappointment, with no substantial progress whatsoever. Malta looks forward to substantive progress during next year's session on items such as the improved and effective functioning of the Conference on Disarmament. We also look forward to early agreement on the establishment and commencement of negotiations under those already identified by the Ad Hoc Committees concerning various pending items on the Conference's agenda and programme of work. It is therefore essential that during the inter-sessional period we take the opportunity to continue consultations with a view to elaborating and formulating decisions for submission and adoption at the commencement of the 1998 Conference on Disarmament session.

Securing peace through regional efforts, we believe, can contribute to enhancing and consolidating wider international security and stability objectives. It is through a commitment to build confidence in our region that Malta views the Mediterranean area. Within the context of the Helsinki Final Act of the then Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, the link between the security and stability of the Mediterranean and that of Europe was recognized. Since then, Malta has been keen to further develop this interregional approach to security and stability in the Euro-Mediterranean area.

The recent meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Euro-Mediterranean area, held in Malta last April, has led to further advances in the field of confidence- and security-building measures. Serious and effective follow-up to its conclusions will form the basis for future development in this field, as it, hopefully, will for other matters addressed by the Conference. As my Prime Minister has said,

> "The Malta Conference reiterated that the serious and deep-seated problems of our region need to be tackled through a process of dialogue and common action, extending over a period of time and covering a whole range of interrelated issues. It is Malta's conviction that this process has generated a political commitment that will effectively contribute to the removal of the misperceptions and prejudice that still exist in the region." [*Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Plenary Meetings, 13th meeting, p. 7*]

The Mediterranean Sea should be viewed not as the dividing mark between North and South, but, rather, as that which provides for a common purpose and link. It is a sea rich in the diversity of cultures, religions and socio-economic situations which comprise its bordering States. It provides an opportunity to challenge diversity, not to eradicate it, but to turn such diversity into a tool for further intraregional networks of cooperation and understanding.

Malta is acutely aware of the need to seek and promote peace and stability in this troubled and complex region. We are determined to be proactive in the quest for peace, and determined to enhance the trust needed to act in the best interests of our societies. Since taking office in October last year, my Government has adopted a policy of active site-specific neutrality. Placed as it is at the southern rim of Europe and at the geographic and strategic centre of the Mediterranean, Malta stands by its commitment to the ideals of European integration as well as those of Mediterranean unity. Malta's neutrality is a direct response to the very specific and unique geopolitical factors that currently exist in the surrounding region.

The ultimate objective of Malta's Mediterranean policy is the transformation of the region into a politically stable and economically prosperous demilitarized, nuclear-weapon-free zone. The establishment of such a zone would further build on the international community's desire to further consolidate the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Established on the basis of arrangements unanimously agreed to by all States of the region, such a zone would inevitably contribute to peace and stability in the Mediterranean. This fact was acknowledged by the 1995 NPT Review Conference, when the creation of such zones was encouraged.

Malta would like to see the United Nations dedicate more time and give more attention to the situation in the Mediterranean, through the Department of Political Affairs. In this context, consideration should be given to the establishment of a Mediterranean desk within this Department, a proposal already made by my Prime Minister in his address to the General Assembly. We believe that the creation of such a desk would facilitate contacts and could assume a more direct role in the implementation of the relevant provisions of resolutions adopted by the General Assembly on strengthening security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region.

The varied agenda of this Committee requires a balanced, realistic and pragmatic approach. Both the nuclear and conventional arms agenda items remain our highest priorities. In each of these areas, the international community has endeavoured to build consensus and advance the principles of disarmament and non-proliferation. More needs to be achieved in both fields, not only to negotiate new agreements, but also to achieve universality of existing ones. It is through the universality and implementation of such agreements that the community of nations will collectively demonstrate its commitment to disarmament in the interest of stability, security and a stable peace.

Mr. Saguier Caballero (Paraguay) (*interpretation from Spanish*): As Coordinator of the Rio Group for the present year, the delegation of Paraguay has the honour of making this statement on behalf of the Group.

First, allow us to express our congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee, and to assure you and the other members of the Bureau of our fullest cooperation.

We would also like to express our gratitude to the Permanent Representative of Belarus, Mr. Alyaksandr Sychou, for his skilled guidance of this Committee during the last General Assembly session.

The issue of international peace and security is one of the most important items on the agenda of the political coordination meetings held at the inter-American level.

The Declaration adopted at the Eleventh Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Rio Group — which took place at Asunción, the capital of Paraguay, on 23 and 24 August last — refers to various aspects of this issue in its paragraphs 40 through 43.

With respect to anti-personnel landmines, the Declaration states the following:

> "Determined to continue to make headway in consolidating the region as an area free of anti-personnel mines, we have agreed to participate actively in the Ottawa process for the prohibition of anti-personnel landmines, and we undertake to work together to make our region the first region free of weapons of this type in the world." [A/52/347, annex I, para. 40]

In keeping with these beliefs, the Rio Group has, through its Heads of State, made it clear that it welcomes the international community's reaction to this question, as evidenced in the results of the Oslo Diplomatic Conference. The Rio Group calls for co-sponsorship of the draft resolution on this issue.

With respect to consultation and confidence-building measures, the Declaration adopted at the Eleventh Summit of the Rio Group states:

> "We express our commitment to implement consultation and confidence-building measures, bearing in mind the need to strengthen political dialogue and cooperation in order to create conditions of greater transparency, stability and security, including a consultation process on the limitation and control of conventional weapons, as recognized in the Santiago Declaration on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures, adopted in November 1995." [ibid., para. 42]

That meeting, together with the meeting of experts held at Buenos Aires in 1994, represents an important milestone on the road to creating a more secure region.

Today, Latin America, motivated by a spirit of cooperation, is involved in open processes of integration in various areas. The region is attempting to consolidate peace and security on the basis of respect for international law. The Rio Group therefore supports efforts aimed at concluding, in the short term, negotiations on an inter-American convention to combat the manufacture and illicit trade of firearms, ammunition, explosives and other related materials, and at opening that convention for signature this year.

In another paragraph of the Declaration, the Presidents stated:

> "We consider that Latin America and the Caribbean have an important role in the full and effective enforcement of the instruments regulating the possession, manufacture and transfer of weapons of mass destruction, and we reiterate our firm determination to keep our region free of weapons of this type, and of arms races. [ibid., para. 41]

In line with this Declaration, the Rio Group attaches great importance to the non-proliferation of chemical and biological weapons. Several countries in the region are active participants in the International Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, in keeping with the spirit of the Mendoza Accord, and also in negotiations to provide a verification mechanism for the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction.

This year marks the thirtieth anniversary of the opening for signature of the Tlatelolco Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America, an event we commemorate with satisfaction because that legal instrument allowed us to consolidate our region as the first to be free of nuclear weapons.

The international community has acknowledged the extraordinary foresight of the authors of the Tlatelolco Treaty, who responded, in an intelligent and creative manner, to the challenge posed by the danger of nuclear proliferation by drafting an international legal instrument that has become an inspiration and a model for other countries wishing to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones. The Rio Group believes that the objectives of the Treaty of Tlatelolco will have been fully achieved once all the countries in the region have ratified it.

The consolidation of the denuclearization regimes established by the Treaty of Tlatelolco in our region, as well as those created by the Treaties of Rarotonga, Pelindaba, and Bangkok, represents an important contribution to international peace and security. It has also allowed the General Assembly to call for the promotion of the shared objectives stipulated in those treaties, such as the exploration and implementation of means of cooperation,

including the consolidation of the Southern Hemisphere and adjacent areas as a region free of nuclear weapons.

The adoption last year of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was a key component in the process of preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons. We hope that all the necessary conditions will be met for its entry into force.

Nonetheless, several issues are still pending, such as the formalization of an agreement to ban the production and stockpiling of fissile material for military use; the establishment of adequate and legally binding guarantees for non-nuclear-weapon States; and the strengthening of existing multilateral safeguard mechanisms. The Rio Group hopes these objectives will be attained very soon.

The Rio Group also believes that the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to Disarmament is important because it will allow for a review of the international agenda on this subject.

Allow us to conclude by noting that in the light of the results of this year's session of the Disarmament Conference, the Rio Group hopes that the Conference can get back into its habitual rhythm of work, with an agenda that includes both nuclear and conventional disarmament issues and that will allow for the implementation of the historic advisory opinion handed down by the International Court of Justice. In that opinion, the Court unanimously proclaimed the obligation of States to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.

Mr. Goonetilleke (Sri Lanka): Let me join those who took the floor before me, Sir, to congratulate you on your unanimous election and assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation in the fulfilment of your responsibilities. Permit me also to pay tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Sychou, who conducted the work of this Committee with great skill during the fifty-first session.

A landmark development this year was the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) in April, four years after it was opened for signature in 1993. With 165 signatories at the time of its entry into force, the CWC is well on its way to becoming yet another international convention with universal participation. As a State party which had ratified the convention at an early stage, Sri Lanka is hopeful that the Russian Federation, one of the major declared possessors of chemical weapons, will find it possible to overcome soon the difficulties delaying the process of ratification. With the holding of the first meeting of the States parties to the Convention, we hope that the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) will soon be able to address and resolve all outstanding issues to the satisfaction of the States parties.

The countdown to the 2000 Review Conference commenced in April with 148 States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) meeting in New York in the Preparatory Committee. The purpose of the meeting was to consider principles, objectives and ways to promote the full implementation of the Treaty, as well as its universality, and to make recommendations thereon to the Review Conference.

One of the principal objectives of the NPT was to undertake negotiations for nuclear disarmament and for the cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date, leading to the elimination of nuclear weapons and the means of their delivery. It is therefore clear that the Treaty was not an end in itself, and did not in any way legitimize the possession of nuclear weapons by a handful of States for ever. Clearly, the Treaty expected the nuclear arms race to be ended and nuclear disarmament to take place at an early date. However, despite the passage of more than 25 years, we have yet to witness the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

In its decision 2, on "Principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament", the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference reiterated that an ultimate goal of the Treaty was the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and the nuclear-weapon States reaffirmed their commitment to pursuing negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to nuclear disarmament. This agreement notwithstanding, the position taken by some nuclear-weapon States since the Review and Extension Conference is rather disturbing.

The steps taken in the recent past, including the announcement by the two major nuclear-weapon States on 21 March 1997 of a reduction in their nuclear arsenals, and the signing of a set of arms control agreements in September, have to be acknowledged as positive developments. While admittedly the envisaged reductions are significant from the point of view of those nuclear-weapon States, it has to be pointed out that START II has not yet been ratified by the State Duma of the Russian Federation. Even after that, there will still be thousands of

nuclear warheads in the hands of the two major nuclear-weapon States. This is certainly not a source of comfort to the international community, which has to depend on the goodwill of the nuclear-weapon States, the reliability of aging nuclear warheads and their delivery systems, and the very security of thousands of nuclear weapons.

To make matters worse, some nuclear-weapon States advance the view that negotiations should be conducted between the two major nuclear-weapon States, to be followed by the remaining three when the former's nuclear weapons come down to the hundreds. They have also taken the position that nuclear disarmament should not be subjected to multilateral negotiation, thus attempting to turn the international community into mere spectators. This is in spite of article VI of the Treaty, which provides for each party to the Treaty to pursue negotiations.

These nuclear-weapon States seem to overlook their treaty obligations, the call made by the Eleventh Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries in 1995, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) advisory opinion of July 1996, the recommendations of the Canberra Commission report of August 1996, and the statement made by 61 retired generals and admirals in December 1996 with regard to nuclear disarmament. Moreover, they seem to ignore that the rationale advanced for retaining nuclear weapons — namely, the theory of nuclear deterrence — is now being rejected by the same persons who embraced it earlier.

Sri Lanka regrets the lack of response to the proposal made by 26 members of the Conference on Disarmament belonging to the Group of 21 on a mandate for an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament in June 1997 and the proposal for a programme of action for elimination of nuclear weapons submitted by 28 members of the same Group in August 1996.

Furthermore, despite the proposal by the Group of 21 and other delegations for the establishment of an ad hoc committee or even a mechanism to discuss the issue, the Conference on Disarmament has been prevented from commencing work on the subject because of the position held by some delegations that nuclear disarmament is not a subject that can be multilaterally negotiated in the forum available to the international community to negotiate disarmament matters.

Sri Lanka would like to urge these delegations to reassess their positions and permit the Conference on Disarmament to begin consultations leading to the establishment of appropriate mechanisms to deal with nuclear disarmament as well as a fissile material cut-off convention when the Conference begins its 1998 session.

Commencement of work on a fissile material cut-off treaty has been delayed since 1995. While some delegations are of the view that such a treaty should be negotiated on a stand-alone basis, others take the position that work on that subject should take place as an integral part of negotiations for nuclear disarmament. Sri Lanka hopes that the Conference on Disarmament will be able to resolve the matter during its 1998 session by treating both subjects on an equal basis.

An issue as old as the NPT is the demand made by the non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the Treaty for security assurances. For a quarter of a century the nuclear-weapon States refused to consider security assurances beyond those contained in Security Council resolution 255 (1968). That the resolution had failed to address the concerns of the non-nuclear-weapon States was demonstrated by the fact that nuclear-weapon States themselves deemed it necessary to come up with Security Council resolution 984 (1995) several weeks before the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. However, the statements made during the Review and Extension Conference by the non-nuclear-weapon States and decision 2 of the Conference confirmed the fact that the attempt made by the nuclear-weapon States fell short of the expectations of the non-nuclear-weapon States.

It was in that context that the Conference determined in decision 2 that "further steps should be considered to assure non-nuclear-weapon States party to the Treaty against the use of nuclear weapons". Conceding to the demand made by the non-nuclear-weapon States for decades, it further stated that "these steps could take the form of an internationally legally binding instrument". Despite the decision of the Review and Extension Conference, no steps whatsoever have been taken for more than two years, either in the context of the NPT or in the Conference on Disarmament, to satisfy the justifiable demand of the non-nuclear-weapon States. It was against this background that the States parties belonging to the Non-Aligned Movement and a cross-section of others demanded at the first session of the Preparatory Committee to the NPT this spring that at the next review conference a legally binding security assurances regime be concluded.

There have been several proposals on the issue, ranging from a protocol to the NPT to an international legal instrument to be worked out either within the context of the

NPT or in the Conference on Disarmament. Against this background, to maintain that there is not enough common ground among the key countries on which to base the negotiations of such a treaty, and to oppose the negotiation of a global negative security assurances treaty, or of a negative security assurances protocol to the NPT, is not the way for the nuclear-weapon States to display good faith.

In the circumstances, Sri Lanka is of the view that the Conference on Disarmament should at the outset of its 1998 session take steps to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee on negative security assurances, if necessary with a revised mandate, to commence immediate negotiations to satisfy the call made by non-nuclear-weapon States for security assurances. In our opinion, the limited time available to the NPT Review Conference would not be sufficient to negotiate an international instrument of this nature. If a fissile material cut-off treaty can be negotiated by the Conference on Disarmament, there is no reason not to entrust the same negotiating forum with the subject of security assurances.

The most effective way to prevent nuclear war is to eliminate nuclear weapons altogether. In addition to General Assembly resolution 51/46D on a Convention on the Prohibition of the Use of Nuclear Weapons, supported by 114 States, a growing number of non-governmental organizations, too, have voiced their views on the matter. Prominent among these non-governmental organizations is the group known as the Lawyers' Committee on Nuclear Policy, representing international lawyers, scientists and disarmament experts, which has laboured tirelessly and produced a model nuclear weapons convention, demonstrating the fact that civil society also has strong views to express on the matter.

The desire to conclude a convention to ban the use of nuclear weapons is shared universally. More than 100 States belonging to the Non-Aligned Movement called for such action at the Ministerial Meeting held in New Delhi in the spring of 1997. Prior to the Non-Aligned Movement meeting, on March 13, the European Parliament adopted a resolution calling on its member States to support the commencement of negotiations in 1997 leading to the conclusion of a convention for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

If the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons will take a considerable period of time, it is logical to demand that a convention prohibiting the use of such inhumane weapons of mass destruction be concluded at an early date. This would enable the nuclear-weapon States to address the question of the total elimination of nuclear weapons at a pace comfortable to them.

On the other side of the scale is a wide variety of weapons falling into the category of conventional weapons. Taking into consideration the large number of lives lost and the immense destruction caused by these weapons, the international community should not delay taking steps to minimize the devastating effects of these weapons. We have to bear in mind the fact that small and vulnerable countries can be destabilized by interested parties or groups relying on small arms, light weapons and explosives. My delegation has studied the report of the United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, contained in document A/52/298, and notes with interest the recommendations set out in paragraphs 79 (e) and 79 (g) on reduction, and in paragraphs 80 (h) and 80 (k) on prevention. We fully support the view expressed in the report that all States and relevant regional and international organizations should intensify their cooperative efforts against all aspects of illicit trafficking. The proposal for an international conference on illicit arms trade merits the serious consideration of all delegations.

The subject of transparency has evoked interest and encouraged debate both in the General Assembly and in the Conference on Disarmament. As we discuss the subject, representatives should be mindful of the fact that the mandate given in General Assembly resolution 46/36 L expired several years ago, that the working group appointed by the General Assembly at its fifty-first session has submitted its report and that substantial debate on the subject has taken place both in New York and in Geneva.

We share the view that transparency cannot be selective. It cannot be limited to conventional weapons alone, ignoring weapons of mass destruction. It cannot focus only on the seven traditional items, leaving aside other weapons that destabilize countries or even entire regions of the world. It also cannot ignore procurement through national production and weapons holdings. Sri Lanka has noted the fact that the Committee of Experts on the review and operation of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms has concluded its work and adopted a report. My delegation regrets that the panel failed to agree on any substantive measures to expand or strengthen the Register. Sri Lanka is ready to support an initiative to request the Conference on Disarmament to reestablish its ad hoc committee on transparency in armaments based on a new mandate taking these concerns into consideration.

The year 1997 can be described as the year of action against anti-personnel landmines, with a number of meetings held in several capitals as follow-up to the Ottawa process. It is heartening to note that close to 100 States were supportive of the Oslo text. In less than two months, the signing ceremony is scheduled to take place in Ottawa, where the ambitious programme for an international agreement banning anti-personnel landmines was initiated almost one year ago.

While the Ottawa process was gathering momentum, there was a long and unproductive debate in the Conference on Disarmament on whether it should or should not play a role on anti-personnel landmines. A number of delegations had fundamental difficulties with the proposal to discuss anti-personnel landmines in the Conference on Disarmament. Some were of the view that anti-personnel landmines should be dealt with under the provisions of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects. Others, referring to the fast-moving Ottawa process, expressed the view that there was already a second track on anti-personnel landmines, with no rationale for opening a third track. Some others took the position that it would be inappropriate to introduce the subject in the Conference on Disarmament without awaiting the final outcome of the Ottawa process. The view was also expressed that consideration of anti-personnel landmines belongs in the humanitarian sphere and that an institution such as the Conference on Disarmament, devoted to disarmament, has no role to play on anti-personnel landmines. With such disparate views, there was no prospect of this issue being taken up for negotiation in the Conference on Disarmament in 1997.

In principle, Sri Lanka welcomes the Canadian initiative for a convention banning anti-personnel landmines. We believe, however, that such a measure should take into consideration various aspects, including alternative methods of defence and the use of anti-personnel landmines by irregular forces, insurgents and others. Given our own security concerns, Sri Lanka will regrettably not be in a position to become a party to the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction in the immediate future.

The Non-Aligned Movement Ministerial Meeting held in New Delhi in April, while reaffirming the importance of international cooperation to ensure peace, security and stability in the Indian Ocean region, acknowledged the importance of the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean continuing informal consultations on the future of the Committee and its work. On the basis of this decision, Sri Lanka, in consultation with members of the Non-Aligned Movement and other members of the Ad Hoc Committee, will present a draft resolution for consideration by the First Committee and the General Assembly.

During previous sessions, we have heard views for and against the reestablishment of an ad hoc committee on prevention of an arms race in outer space. Due to the difficulties faced by the Conference on Disarmament in the past, we have not been able to reach an understanding on the matter. However, towards the end of the 1997 session, the view was expressed that there was no objection in principle to the reestablishment of the ad hoc committee with a revised mandate to undertake work in this sphere. Based on this understanding, my delegation, in consultation with other interested delegations, proposes to introduce a draft resolution with a view to facilitating work by the Conference on Disarmament in 1998.

In conclusion, let me briefly refer to the United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament. My delegation is pleased to note the numerous activities conducted by the Kathmandu Centre in the past and during 1997, and wishes to appeal to those countries within and outside the region to continue funding the Centre to enable it to continue its services to the region.

Mr. Elaraby (Egypt): Allow me at the outset, Sir, to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the First Committee and to congratulate the other members of the Bureau in advance of their election. We have worked together closely, and I am confident that with your wide experience you will be able to guide our efforts to a successful conclusion. I assure you of my delegation's support and cooperation.

I would like also to recognize the presence among us today of the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky.

This session of the Committee has convened in a political atmosphere that should be properly reflected upon and carefully analyzed in order to serve the interests of the international community in the field of disarmament. This exercise will assist us as we approach an important phase in reforming the work of the Organization both in structure and in substance. I find it pertinent at this stage to emphasize once again the priorities of the international community in the field of disarmament, which should be

observed in any reform process. These priorities were clearly outlined at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, held in 1978, where nuclear disarmament was accorded the highest priority, followed by other weapons of mass destruction, and then by conventional weapons.

The immensely destructive character of nuclear weapons should generate a momentum for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. The attainment of the goal of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons is indispensable, and the rationale for that resolve should be self-evident: the mere existence of nuclear weapons constitutes a serious threat to international peace and security. It is therefore ironic that the efforts of the international community have not yielded significant results despite consecutive General Assembly resolutions and references in international legal instruments, most notably, of course, article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice, the findings of the Canberra Commission and, last but not least, the determined contributions of non-governmental organizations. A cross-sectoral factor is that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.

In this vein Egypt, as coordinator of the Group of 21 in the Conference on Disarmament, submitted in August 1996, on behalf of 28 of its members, a proposal for a programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons. This programme of action is designed to overcome the lacuna in strong and explicit commitments relating to nuclear disarmament, especially from the nuclear-weapon States. We still believe that this programme should be seriously studied in the ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament, whose establishment on a priority basis, as a subsidiary body of the Conference on Disarmament, is called for by the General Assembly in its resolution 51/45 O to commence negotiations on a phased programme of nuclear disarmament and for the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons within a time-bound framework.

Egypt further proposed in the Conference on Disarmament a possible mandate for the ad hoc committee which takes into account diverse concerns, but clearly the lack of political will remains the major obstacle for any advance in this domain. The proposed mandate of the ad hoc committee encompasses simultaneous work towards the realization of a comprehensive agreement banning the production of fissile material for weapons purposes as envisaged in paragraph 4 (b) of decision 2, on "Principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament", of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference.

Special attention should be accorded to achieving the universality of the NPT — the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime — where an obligation exists on each of its parties, according to article VI, to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to the cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.

We regard the commencement of the preparatory process for the NPT Review Conference in the year 2000 as an important phase in which efforts should be consolidated towards the issuance by the Review Conference of an integral consensus document to enhance the implementation of all NPT provisions and build constructively on the outcome of the 1995 Conference, which consisted of three decisions and the resolution on the Middle East — adopted, it should be recalled, by consensus. Egypt notes with satisfaction that the first session of the Preparatory Committee recommended to the next session the allocation of specific time to be devoted to discussions on ways and means for the implementation of the Middle East resolution, and in this regard we underscore the special responsibility of the sponsors of the resolution in seeing to its full implementation.

Furthermore, the review process should give adequate attention to the questions of nuclear disarmament and security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States with a view to drafting an internationally legally binding instrument on comprehensive security assurances. In this context, we welcome the decision of the first Preparatory Committee to allocate specific time for the consideration of this issue.

Egypt welcomes the establishment of the Provisional Technical Secretariat of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization. Notwithstanding the shortcomings of the CTBT, which cast a shadow over its true comprehensiveness, we consider it an important, though limited, step in the right direction which should be followed by additional steps toward the goal of nuclear disarmament. However, I would like to register our discontent with recent reports on subcritical tests that run contrary to the contractual as well as the moral obligations under the Treaty and to its spirit. Egypt calls for responsible

attitudes, respecting the letter and spirit of the Treaty, so as not to undermine its value and thereby hinder the ratification process.

Egypt views as very important the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones around the globe. The concept in itself represents a useful tool for the promotion of the non-proliferation regime within the framework of the NPT. It is in this vein that we recently welcomed the culmination of tireless African efforts in the adoption of the Treaty of Pelindaba, signed by the African States in Cairo, establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa, and the adoption of the Cairo Declaration, which reflected a number of African positions that bring the world one step closer to attaining the goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

With regard to the Middle East region, the General Assembly has been calling for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East since 1974. Despite the fact that the resolution on this item has been adopted annually by consensus since 1980, the progress achieved towards the attainment of this objective has come from all the States of the region. In this context it has to be noted that all the States members of the League of Arab States have become parties to the NPT as a reflection of their firm belief and conviction that freeing the Middle East from nuclear weapons will certainly bring peace and security to the whole region. At the same time, Israel persists in defying repeated calls to join the NPT and to subject its facilities to full-scope International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards.

Arguments advanced by Israel to justify its position against joining the NPT and against placing all its unsafeguarded nuclear facilities under full-scope IAEA safeguards are now the serious obstacle — the only serious obstacle — that prevents the establishment of the zone, thus undermining efforts towards achieving a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East. This attitude from Israel not only prevents the establishment of the nuclear-weapon-free zone but also induces a similar position on the part of many States in the region with regard to the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention. The rationale is simple enough: security cannot be divided between various weapons of mass destruction or even between weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons.

The initiative launched in 1990 by President Mubarak to establish a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East carries a lot of weight in this regard. It will be recalled in this context that in paragraph 14 of resolution 687 (1991) the Security Council endorsed the necessity of establishing a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East and, again, this has not been implemented.

The international community, and in particular the United Nations, has a special responsibility for not allowing one State in the region, namely Israel, to benefit from pursuing ambiguous policies in the nuclear field, particularly in view of the recent deteriorating political situation in the Middle East, for which the Israeli Government, and the Israeli Government alone, bears responsibility.

In this spirit, and in order to achieve a world free from nuclear weapons, Egypt will continue to support a draft resolution on the nuclear weapon-free southern hemisphere and adjacent areas. We consider that the ultimate objective of the draft resolution on this subject deserves the support of all States, particularly after the amendment of the text by its sponsors to take into consideration the observations expressed last year on this particular issue.

Egypt also supports the initiative launched by Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia and encourages full United Nations support for this newly born initiative, in the same manner as the United Nations and the International Atomic Energy Agency supported the African States in the formulation of the Treaty of Pelindaba by assisting the Governments of the region and the Governments concerned to settle the remaining policy and technical issues, thus assisting in advancing the cause of nuclear non-proliferation.

The Egyptian Government supports the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms as a confidence-building mechanism, not — and I repeat, not — as an arms-control mechanism. We share disappointments over the outcome of the meetings of the Panel of Governmental Experts, not only because it failed to broaden the scope of the Register to cover military holdings and procurement through national production, but also — and I believe more importantly — because it failed to include an eighth category on stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction.

In our view, transparency with regard to weapons of mass destruction is as important as transparency with regard to conventional weapons, if not more important, for the same reason of the indivisibility of security. The

international community cannot, for instance, expect the States of the Middle East to ignore the reports on the existence of nuclear weapons in the region and continue to report to the Register on their conventional arms. I shall not speak at length on this point and would merely refer to the consolidated reply presented by the States members of the League of Arab States, as contained in the report of the Secretary-General on this item. Meanwhile, Egypt is considering the possibility of presenting a new draft resolution under agenda item 71 (c), "Transparency in armaments", related to transparency in weapons of mass destruction, in order to highlight the need for a parallel approach that would make transparency complete in all fields of disarmament.

As to small arms and light weapons, the report of the Panel of Governmental Experts constitutes a solid basis for further work, but we should not lose sight of two essential facts: first, the conflicts in areas that have been examined by the Panel did not erupt because of the existence of small arms but, rather, for deep-rooted political and historic reasons; secondly, notwithstanding the attention given to small arms, most notably by the Disarmament Commission and the Panel, the elimination of nuclear weapons should be accorded the utmost priority. Nothing can justify any change in the scale of priorities.

I now turn to the landmines issue. The fact is that Egypt is one of the most heavily mined countries in the world, with over 22.7 million landmines planted in its soil by regional and extraregional belligerents during various international and regional conflicts. In this light, I would like to put on record Egypt's position on how to approach the landmine problem comprehensively. We believe that measures aimed at curbing mines should be accompanied by serious and concrete steps geared towards mine clearance in affected countries that are unable to achieve that objective on their own, by providing technical and financial support and through the transfer of necessary advanced technology to enable these States to overcome this tragic legacy. This is, in our view, essential.

It is also useful here to refer to the Final Document of the Review Conference of States Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, held at Geneva in May 1996, which incorporated a paragraph on the role of States involved in the deployment of mines in the process of their clearance, in which the States Parties recognize:

> "the important role that the international community, particularly States involved in the deployment of mines, can play in assisting in mine clearance in affected countries through the provision of necessary maps and information and appropriate technical and material assistance to remove or otherwise render ineffective existing minefields, mines and booby-traps". [CCW/CONF.I/16 (Part I), annex C, eighth preambular paragraph]

That position has been supported by the resolution adopted a few months ago on this particular issue by the Organization of African Unity at Harare.

It is with this in mind that Egypt participated as an observer throughout the Ottawa process. Regrettably, the final Oslo text contains vague provisions on mine clearance and no reference acknowledging the responsibility of States involved in the deployment of mines. In addition, it disregards exceptions related to limited use to accommodate national-security concerns. Egypt therefore, along with many countries, is still studying the treaty and will formulate its position with regard to it and the draft resolution, on the basis of the facts I have mentioned.

From an institutional angle, moreover, the whole Ottawa process also raises serious questions about the role and credibility of the multilateral disarmament machinery as established by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Last year Egypt registered its discontent with the procedure by which the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was brought to the attention of the General Assembly. We had hoped that it would not set a precedent. Unfortunately, history is repeating itself today, but in a much more sophisticated fashion.

A pattern seems to be crystallizing, and there exists a need today to redress the situation and to see ways and means to promote disarmament principles, disarmament objectives, disarmament priorities and machinery. This can be done only by convening a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

Egypt, while regretting, like many countries, the stalemate in discussions of the matter at the 1997 session of the Disarmament Commission, believes that the General Assembly should agree at this session on a specific date for the convening of the fourth special session on disarmament, after which we would work on formulating its agenda. We still hold the view that 1999 should be the year for the fourth special session, which would serve as a useful

catalyst for the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in the year 2000.

Before concluding, allow me to congratulate the Secretary-General on his comprehensive programme to reform the whole United Nations system. I find it relevant in this forum to make some salient remarks on the disarmament-related issues at hand.

First, the only consensus document in the field of disarmament is the 1978 Final Document of the first special session devoted to disarmament, which accorded nuclear disarmament the highest priority.

Secondly, there are well-established terms of reference in the field of disarmament which were duly taken into account in formulating various international disarmament instruments and which should continue to govern our approaches in the disarmament field.

Thirdly, some would like to accord higher priority to conventional disarmament, particularly to small arms and light weapons, because they are often used in conflicts on certain continents. Small arms and light weapons have never been the root causes of conflict, but they were and will remain a tool of political influence. This point must be viewed from that angle.

Fourthly, the question of arms regulation is a very important one. Indeed, the United Nations Charter contains reference to the term, but its application was envisaged, at the San Francisco Conference and consequently in the Charter, within the framework of the collective security system called for in Chapter VII. The establishment of such a collective security system remains unfulfilled as of today.

Fifthly, the upgrading of the Centre for Disarmament to a Department is an encouraging step. However, its title, for the reasons I have just explained, should in our view be limited to "Department of Disarmament Affairs", and it should base its work on the priorities and mandates agreed on by Member States. My delegation, along with other non-aligned States, will make its position known when the General Assembly considers item 157, on United Nations reform.

In conclusion, I would like to stress the importance of the continued efforts of the United Nations in the field of disarmament. This collective endeavour must strive towards optimum coordination between the work of the First Committee, the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission in order to complement international efforts in the pursuit of general and complete disarmament, which remains our ultimate goal.

The Chairman: I now call on the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Mr. José Mauricio Bustani.

Mr. Bustani (Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons): In 1899, 26 nations attending the First Hague Peace Conference declared a prohibition against the use of poison gas, marking the birth of a dream of a world in which such weapons would be banned forever. Almost 100 years later, on 29 April this year, fulfillment of that dream became a reality with the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention. It is thus an immense privilege and honour for me to be able to speak to the Committee today as the first Director-General of the Convention's implementing body, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), and to inform the Committee about the successful launch of the momentous task of eliminating chemical weapons.

Why does the Chemical Weapons Convention hold such promise when previous efforts have been less than successful? The answer lies in its unique qualities. It is the first multilateral treaty to be simultaneously comprehensive, non-discriminatory and verifiable. It is comprehensive in that it aims to eliminate an entire category of weapons of mass destruction within specific predetermined time-frames. It is non-discriminatory in that all States Parties to the Convention, without exception, relinquish the right to engage in any chemical-weapon-related activities. The Convention is verifiable in that it provides for on-site inspections, including short-notice challenge inspections, to clarify and resolve any questions concerning possible non-compliance.

It is therefore evident that the Convention has broken new ground in the history of disarmament and the elimination of weapons of mass destruction. Negotiated over more than 20 years, the text of the Convention was adopted by the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva during a time of hope and optimism. The cold war had just ended, and barriers both real and perceived were falling, paving the way for precisely this type of treaty — negotiated on a multilateral basis, as opposed to the bipolar accords with which the world was more familiar. This in part explains its impressive membership for so young a multilateral instrument: 87 States were party to the Convention upon its entry into force. Now, 100 States have ratified or acceded, and a further 67 have signed the

Convention. Thus, in terms of membership, it is now second only to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which, by the way, had only 47 ratifying States as it entered into force.

The Convention is not only evidence of a new era in international relations; it is also an important part of the momentum in the field of disarmament which the world has witnessed over recent years. Successful implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention will be a key component in the further development and strengthening of a nascent broader international regime to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and ensure confidence regarding their elimination. The OPCW faces unprecedented challenges as it embarks on the implementation of the Convention. No other international agency of its kind has been constituted with so wide a mandate. I am happy to be able to be here today to say that although these are indeed the early days yet, work is going according to plan and hopes for the future are bright.

Lying at the heart of the Convention is the unique system it creates to verify compliance with its provisions. Essentially, the success of the Convention will depend on the success of the verification regime. I am happy to inform the Committee that solid progress has been registered in the first six months of operations. During the preparatory phase, it had been assumed for budgetary and planning purposes that only three States — the Russian Federation, the United States and one unnamed other — would declare possession of chemical weapons. In fact, seven States have already declared either possession of chemical weapons or the capability to produce them. This list does not include the other declared possessor of chemical weapons, the Russian Federation, which has yet to ratify. Thus, a clearer picture is already emerging about the quantity and locations of chemical-weapon activities, past and present, in the world — an essential step in the process of the eventual elimination of this class of weapon.

The Secretariat continues to receive a steady flow of information from the States parties. As of 30 September, it has received initial declarations from 63 States parties. In addition, other required notifications, such as notification of a State's national authority, points of entry for inspections and standing diplomatic-clearance numbers are also being received. Intended transfers of specified highly toxic chemicals produced in small quantities for protective, medical, pharmaceutical or other peaceful purposes — the so-called Schedule 1 chemicals are also now being declared to the OPCW so that such chemicals can be tracked.

Progress has also been solid as regards the second leg of the Convention's verification system: on-site inspections. The very first OPCW inspection was launched on 4 June 1997, just over a month after entry into force. This took place in the United States at a facility which had been in the process of destroying its stockpiles of chemical weapons at the time the Convention entered into force. Altogether, some 80 initial inspections and visits have been conducted on the territory of 17 States. This includes both chemical-weapon-related facilities and facilities producing Schedule 1 chemicals. The Convention requires that the initial inspection of facilities of this type should be completed within six months of its entry into force, an onerous requirement but, nevertheless, one we aim to achieve before the end of this month. In addition, permanent monitoring of chemical-weapon destruction operations is underway at three chemical-weapon destruction facilities in the United States. More than 100 inspections will be completed before the end of the year.

The OPCW has also been working hard to actively assist States in implementing the Convention nationally. The declaration requirements for States parties, for example, are extremely complex, and some States have experienced difficulties in compiling the requisite information. Nonetheless, as a result of the combined efforts of States parties and the Secretariat, the momentum has been maintained and the situation as regards national compliance with all provisions of the Convention continues to improve.

While the verification system forms the core of the work of the OPCW, there are other important tasks to be undertaken, a critical one being the implementation of article XI of the Convention, on economic and technological development. The intimate relationship between disarmament and non-proliferation commitments, on the one hand, and free trade and cooperation for peaceful purposes, on the other, is reflected in this article, and it is thus essential that the careful balance be preserved as the Convention is implemented. In addition to providing training courses for personnel of national authorities so as to permit them to properly and effectively implement the Convention at a national level, the Secretariat is working on a number of projects and programmes aimed at promoting technical cooperation between States parties.

None of this is to say that we are without challenges. One of the most important is the need to develop a culture of transparency as regards the work of the OPCW. It is true that the Convention itself requires that confidential information be protected, and it is true that it was this

reassurance that allowed such an intrusive verification system to be accepted in the first place. But the preservation of confidential information in the field of the chemical industry needs to be balanced with the need to be as open and transparent as possible about activities in the military field. I have therefore urged all States parties to strive to overcome their traditional reluctance to be open, not only to the OPCW, but also to the outside world, about chemical weapons related matters.

If we are to have any credibility as a body capable of overseeing the elimination of chemical weapons, we must be able to provide information on the Organization's activities and the progress being made in identifying and destroying chemical weapons stockpiles and programmes. Our mandate is to protect confidential information, not to perpetuate secrecy. As Director-General of the OPCW, I have as one of my paramount objectives transcending these difficulties. There are already signs that this is happening. India, for example, publicly declared its chemical weapons related activities while making declarations to the OPCW. Forty-five out of 49 States parties that had submitted their initial declarations. The fact that some of these States have taken these courageous decisions, notwithstanding that they perceive considerable security threats in their respective regions, highlights their commendable long-range vision that only through personal example and truly global action will the Convention be able to achieve its ultimate goal of complete universality. I believe that actions such as these are commendable in their own respect, and contribute towards demonstrating that the Convention is indeed working in a successful manner.

Another fundamental challenge is to promote the universality of the Convention. Already the prognosis is good — four of the five permanent Members of the Security Council are States parties, and the Convention captures the overwhelming majority of the world's chemical industry. Unfortunately, some key States remain outside, and in that regard my utmost priority is to facilitate ratification of the Convention by the Russian Federation. With 40,000 agent tonnes of chemical weapons, the presence of the Russian Federation is essential if the Convention is to fulfil its aim of eliminating chemical weapons in a comprehensive manner. The presence of the Russian Federation in this regime is also important because of its role in the overall global security arena and because it is one of the five permanent Members of the Security Council. Reflecting the importance of its participation, a number of States have offered to assist in the destruction process once Russia is on board.

There is progress. The question of ratification is on the Duma's agenda for this period. I and other senior officials travelled to Moscow last month to discuss the matter with the Russian authorities. I am happy to report that there is a clear desire on the part of the Russian Federation to join this Convention. Given the willingness of other States to assist Russia financially, and the political will which has been demonstrated by the Russian authorities to join the Convention, I am optimistic that a positive vote will occur and that we will see the Russian Federation as a full fledged member of the OPCW by the second session of the Conference of States parties in December.

The OPCW's efforts in this regard will have to be complemented by individual and collective actions by its member States. From among the 67 signatory States, the ratification of the CWC by the Russian Federation will have, by far, the most dramatic impact on the prospects for the Convention's ultimate future success. Russia is currently the largest declared possessor of chemical weapons in the world. It has one of the largest chemical industries, and is a permanent Member of the Security Council and a member of the G-8. My firm conviction is that its ratification of the CWC will pave the way for a number of other ratifications, including those of States neighbouring Russia, which at present are clearly awaiting a political signal from Moscow. The fact that my first official visit as Director-General was to the Russian Federation — still a signatory State, rather than a member State of the OPCW — is a measure of the very highest priority which I attach to early Russian ratification of the CWC.

As the Russian Parliament is finalizing its debate on CWC ratification, the next few days will become the litmus test of whether Russia intends to live up to its leadership role on international security and disarmament issues, or whether it will choose what is, in my view, the dangerous path of isolationism. I firmly believe that the Russian people, through their representatives in Parliament, will make the right choice, and the Convention will be ratified now. This is the only outcome which will be consistent with the pressing requirement for Russia to integrate — both politically and economically — with the rest of the world, and not distance itself from it.

There is no basis whatsoever for questioning Russia's support for the Convention and its belief that the CWC will be instrumental in strengthening Russia's national security. To start with, the signing of the CWC in 1993 would have been impossible without the critical Russian involvement. Chemical weapons are now excluded from the Russian

military doctrine. The Russian leadership, including President Yeltsin himself, has on many occasions confirmed its strong commitment to the CWC. The Russian Parliament on a number of occasions, most recently in April this year, has made important declarations in support of the CWC. The Duma stated, in particular, that it recognizes

> "the great international importance of the CWC ratification by Russia"

and

> "the need to completely exclude the possibility of the use of chemical weapons"

and that it

> "intends to make a contribution to the implementation of the Convention's goals".

The outcome of the ratification debate in Moscow — eagerly awaited around the world — will be, of course, the ultimate test of the validity of these statements.

The Russian Duma has listed four basic concerns which are being weighed in the ratification debate. These were summed up in its address to the first session of the Conference of OPCW States parties in April this year. I have recently written to the leadership of the Russian Parliament setting out my views on each of the four specific topics of concern contained in that important document. I believe they will have been helpful to the members of Parliament in making the right choice in favour of CWC ratification.

First and foremost, is the issue of funding for the destruction of chemical weapons and the related possibility that Russia might not be able to complete the destruction of its chemical weapons on time. Member States of the OPCW are well aware of the need for international assistance for the destruction of the Russian chemical weapons. The United States and many countries in Europe have already announced their offers of help. I believe that — assuming Russia ratifies the CWC — the scope of international assistance will increase, in accordance with the commitments already made, once the Russian chemical weapon destruction programme gets well under way. Some critics contend that international assistance so far has not been sufficient. However, others see it as seedcorn, or as something to provide a jump-start to the destruction project.

I believe it is too early to say whether or not Russia will be able to complete destruction of its chemical weapons stockpile within the time-frames established by the Convention. While one cannot predict the future with certainty, if Russia implements its obligations under the Convention in good faith, and is still prevented from completing destruction of its stockpile for reasons beyond its control, such *force majeure* circumstances will, of course, be taken into account by other member States. It would run counter to the spirit — and in this particular case to the letter — of the CWC to punish a State party which is willing to comply with its obligations under the Convention, but is unable to do so for very specific and objective reasons.

That said, legally speaking, concerns over the costs of destruction are not directly linked to the decision on whether or not Russia should ratify the CWC. Russia has pledged to destroy its chemical weapons anyway. The Parliament recently adopted the federal law on the destruction of chemical weapons, and the President has signed the Decree launching the federal programme for their destruction. Therefore, the destruction of chemical weapons in Russia is already the law of the land. If Russia chooses to destroy its chemical weapons stockpile, it will, being part of the OPCW, most probably enjoy the broadest possible international support and assistance, which it most certainly will not have should it decide to stay outside the CWC.

In the latter case — to comply with its own internal decisions — Russia will have to destroy its chemical weapons on its own and in all likelihood also be subject to economic sanctions under the Convention. The only real budgetary consequence of the decision to ratify the Chemical Weapons Convention, therefore, would be the costs of Russia's participation in the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). These costs will be modest, especially compared with the advantages of membership, including trade in chemicals.

The second concern mentioned in the Duma's address relates to the burden of the costs of verification of the Russian chemical weapons facilities, which in accordance with Articles IV and V of the Convention have to be borne by Russia. The final decision on which categories of costs would have to be reimbursed by the inspected State party to the OPCW will be made at the second session of the Conference of States Parties, scheduled for 1 to 5 December this year. If Russia becomes OPCW member State by then it will be able to participate fully in the taking of this important decision.

The secretariat of course is mandated to apply the Convention's verification regime in a balanced way in all member States. There can be and will be no discrimination against any country in this regard. Nor will there be procedures particularly favouring one State over another. Furthermore, the OPCW will carry out its verification mission in the most cost-effective way possible, consistent with the requirements of the Convention. If such cost-effective schemes — in particular sequential inspections — are introduced, the amount of reimbursement which Russia will have to pay to the OPCW for verification of its facilities in 1998 — provided the secretariat's assumptions about the number of the relevant Russian facilities are correct and that the destruction schedule has not changed — would be indeed modest, probably on the order of not more than $3 million to $4 million. Depending on the outcome of the decisions to be taken in the near future, hopefully with Russian participation, this amount may be reduced even further. As for the Russian contribution to the regular OPCW budget in 1998, it would most likely not exceed $4 million. All in all, we are talking about an annual total contribution of less than $10 million.

The third concern involves the requirements for conversion of the Russian former chemical weapons production facilities. I indicated to the Russian parliamentary leadership that I believed the real magnitude of this problem had been vastly exaggerated, as Russia seems to have only five former chemical weapons production facilities. Still, any issue deserves to be judged on its own merits.

The very fact that the Convention permits conversion of former chemical weapons production facilities indicates that conversion is viewed as a means to alleviate, not worsen, economic difficulties. This is why the Convention does not require the destruction of standard buildings and standard equipment at such facilities. Only those features of buildings and items of equipment which are characteristic of chemical weapons production facilities and which differ from the prevailing commercial chemical industry standards need to be destroyed. As for the frequency of subsequent inspections of converted facilities, it will be determined solely by the degree of risk the converted facility poses to the purposes of the Convention. The right to re-inspect such facilities cannot and will not be abused by the secretariat. The Convention provides effective means to guard against any such abuse.

One request for conversion from a current State party, which will have to be decided upon in accordance with the Convention at the December session of the Conference, has already been endorsed by the Executive Council. In doing so the Council took into account the economic need to convert the facility in question and to retain standard buildings which formerly housed a chemical weapons production plant. The logic of the Council's decision should allay the Russian concerns about conversion and thus send an important and reassuring signal to Russia.

Finally, Russia, being the largest declared chemical weapons possessor and a country with a sizeable chemical industry, clearly deserves a prominent place in the OPCW. I am convinced that timely ratification of the Convention will provide Russia with ample opportunities to assume a position in the organization commensurate with its status. Timely means now, immediately; otherwise Russian inspectors will not be able to be recruited, Russian nationals will be unable to compete for the remaining vacant posts within the secretariat and, last but not least, Russia will have no place in the decision-making process of the OPCW. Instead it will have to rely on a bilateral arrangements, under conditions which may well not be as advantageous as those established under the Chemical Weapons Convention, in order to be able to assure the international community that the Russian domestic chemical weapon destruction law is being observed.

Russia will not enjoy the benefits of a universal regime under which every member State is treated on equal grounds. I do not see why the Russian Government and the Duma would wish to opt for such an alternative, not even for financial reasons, when the obvious way — offered to them by the international community and the OPCW itself — is immediate ratification. Such action will ensure that Russia is able to continue playing a prominent role in world affairs. I appeal to those who represent the Russian Federation here to send a sincere message back to Moscow now — today, immediately — before my organization is left with no alternative but to give up on the matter of Russian participation in this noble cause.

I also appeal to all States of the OPCW, in particular the major players, to help the Duma to understand the potential gains, both political and financial, of accelerating the ratification process. I ask them to signify once again their preparedness to help alleviate this burden inherited by the present Russian administration and its financial consequences, thus helping to ensure the success of our commitment to a world free of chemical weapons, which is the foundation stone on which our infant organization is built. In doing so those member States will be demonstrating their true commitment to this first truly multilateral disarmament treaty.

Timing is therefore critical. In accordance with the Convention's provisions Russia will become a full member of the OPCW 30 days after it deposits its instrument of ratification of the Convention here in New York with the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Therefore, in order to ensure that Russia participates and has the right to vote on all matters during the December session of the Conference, its instrument of ratification should be deposited no later than 31 October, in 15 days.

The successful launch of the OPCW verification regime on one hand, and the Russian ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention on the other, will be the two most important developments in global chemical disarmament in 1997. When both have materialized, the international community will be able to look with more certainty at the prospect of creating a world free of chemical weapons.

There are some other key States whose ratification is also important to the universality of the Convention, and we are doing all in our power to bring them within the fold as soon as possible. With regard to States that have not even signed the Convention, we will continue our efforts to stress the political, economic and technological benefits of joining. As the number of States parties increases, chemical weapons will be progressively delegitimized and, by the same token, political constraints on their development will be substantially reinforced.

I assumed the responsibility of the post of Director-General of the OPCW in the firm belief that the way forward was to promote transparency and open-mindedness and to lead a lean and dynamic organization. My first six months in office have further persuaded me of the importance of this approach. In the coming months, I will work tirelessly to promote and sustain transparency as regards States parties' military activities affected by the Convention. I will also do everything in my power to assist and encourage the Russian Federation to ratify the Convention — an essential step in the Convention's long-term success and viability as a disarmament regime.

There is a great deal of hard work ahead. At this juncture, however, it is appropriate to pause and reflect that the first six months in the life of the Chemical Weapons Convention have shown that a multilateral disarmament agreement can work and in fact is working — something that I assume to be the sincere desire of all countries. This Convention, a first in many respects, is a major boost for similar efforts in other fields of disarmament, and for this we can be justifiably proud.

I thank you, Sir, for giving me the opportunity to report on the progress to date of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, which I have the honour to lead.

The Chairman: We have heard the last speaker for this afternoon. A delegation has asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Before I give the floor to delegations wishing to exercise their right of reply, I remind members that, in accordance with decision 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply shall be limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Ri Jang Gon (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I asked for the floor in order to react to the accusation against my country made just now by the South Korean delegate. It is none other than South Korea that has introduced large stocks of nuclear and chemical weapons into South Korea, yet has no real say about these stocks.

The nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula is a question to be dealt with directly between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPROK) and the United States, in accordance with the Agreed Framework. The Agreed Framework clearly stipulates the provisions that the DPROK and the United States should implement within specified time periods. If the nuclear issue is resolved between the DPROK and the United States of America, other issues, such as the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, will be settled automatically.

As for chemical weapons, my country was the victim of chemical weapons during the Korean War. As an affected country, it knows better than anyone else about the indiscriminate nature of chemical weapons. As for the accession to the Chemical Weapons Convention, that is entirely within the sovereign rights of my country.

My delegation wishes to advise the South Korean delegate to pursue an independent policy, free from dependence on outside forces, and to raise its voice for the withdrawal of outside forces, together with nuclear and chemical weapons as well as landmines.

Mr. Paek (Republic of Korea): Instead of responding point by point to the allegations made by the North Korean delegation, I would simply like to set the record straight by elaborating our position on the DPROK's continuing non-compliance with the safeguards agreement, into which it

freely entered with the International Atomic Energy Agency under the provisions of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

We have no doubt that the 1994 Geneva Agreed Framework between the United States and the DPROK if fully implemented could contribute to the ultimate resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue. That is one of the reasons why my Government has continued to play a central role in providing two light-water reactors to North Korea under the auspices of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization.

The point we wish to make here once again is that bilateral arrangements, such as the Agreed Framework, are intended to supplement but not replace, supersede or detract from the global nuclear non-proliferation regime under the NPT. Therefore, North Korea should not attempt to use the Agreed Framework as an excuse for its non-compliance with the multilateral obligations to which all parties to the NPT must adhere.

The South-North Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula goes one step further than the NPT and the Agreed Framework in the level of non-proliferation commitments it contains. North Korea will do a great service to the cause of peace on the Korean peninsula and in northeast Asia if it abides by the solemn commitment that it freely entered into with the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Ri Jang Gon (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): The repeated political rhetoric of South Korea about my country resembles the Korean proverb that a thief shouts, "Stop thief!" It is none other than South Korea that has introduced nuclear weapons into South Korea yet has real say about them. I repeat again, the Korean peninsula nuclear issue is a question that should be dealt with between the DPROK and the United States. South Korea should not attempt to poke its nose into this affair. I advise the South Korean delegate to sit down and see what would happen.

The Chairman: I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation to make a statement.

Mr. Berdennikov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): I would like to thank Mr. Bustani for the attention that he found it necessary to pay my country in his statement. I believe that such attention to one country, which has just signed the Chemical Weapons Convention, seems to tell us at least two things. Firstly, that isolation does not threaten us. And secondly, when we become full-fledged participants in the Convention we can expect a similar or even greater degree of attention to our positions from the organization that Mr. Bustani heads.

As for the substance of the question of Russia's participation in the Convention, our position was stated authoritatively in our intervention before this Committee on 14 October. A decision on this matter will be taken — I hope in the very near future — on the basis of our national interests. And we do not view the attention paid to us, as demonstrated by Mr. Bustani, as an attempt to pressure our sovereign decision-making.

The meeting rose at 6.20 p.m.